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Assessing Indonesian Diplomacy in the Pacific Islands

This paper considers Indonesia's role in Pacific regional politics. During the last decade, Indonesia has intensified engagement with the South Pacific countries. Indonesia's integration into regional and sub-regional groupings in the Pacific has enabled the country to manoeuvre within the region and to exert political influence on a growing number of South Pacific countries. Some Pacific leaders consider Indonesia as a 'new friend', a term used to label non-traditional partners that have a minor role and stay for a short-term in the Pacific region (Maclellan, 2015). However, Indonesia's partnerships with South Pacific countries could change its role to a greater one in the Pacific region in future.

Indonesia's intensifying engagement in the Pacific region is seen against a backdrop of a Pacific region becoming more complex. Fiji began the Pacific islands' trend of engaging with non-traditional states to counter the effects of international isolation following the military takeover of 2006 and its suspension from the Pacific Island Forum in 2009 (Maclellan, 2015). Pacific islands have become more assertive and less reliant on 'traditional' partners in a trend Fry and Tarte (2015) describe as the 'New Pacific Diplomacy'. Some argue that a rising China is a threat to American dominance in the Pacific region and to the norms and rules of the existing regional order. Hence, a new era of geostrategic competition has reached the Pacific region (Morgan, 2018). Indonesia has used opportunities in this complex Pacific region to pursue a stronger engagement with South Pacific countries.

This paper aims to assess Indonesia's activities in the Pacific region. It considers how Indonesia's engagement with South Pacific countries is influencing Pacific regional international relations by assessing Indonesia's activities in the Pacific region over the last decade. It argues that Indonesia has become a destabilising player in the Pacific region, especially in the past five years. The first part of the paper provides a brief background of Indonesia's engagement in the Pacific region. The second section investigates Indonesian engagement with South Pacific countries at the regional, sub-regional and bilateral levels. The focus of regional and sub-regional levels will be on three Pacific organisations: the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), the Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF) and the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG). The third section discusses the effects of Indonesian actions in the South Pacific. This highlights that Indonesia's actions have affected the Pacific region's international relations dynamics relating to the following: 1. the politics of PIF, PIDF, MSG,

2. relations between member countries, 3. regional countries' relations with China, and 4. Australia's regional activities. It concludes by arguing that increased Indonesian engagement with South Pacific countries is a concern for the future of the prevailing Pacific regional order.

The information found in this paper was compiled by assessing various sources. Primary data was assessed from government documents and publications from regional and sub-regional organisations. Secondary data was gathered from articles in journals and magazines, published books, and internet sources. This paper begins with a background of Indonesia's Pacific strategy and concerns raised about the effects of increased Indonesian engagement in the Pacific region.

Background

Much of the current diplomatic activity in the Pacific region has made the region complex (Batley, 2018). A new era of strategic competition has reached the Pacific region, in which traditional and new partners have stepped up their engagement with South Pacific countries (Morgan, 2018). China has been the most notable of new partners who has increasingly engaged with South Pacific countries, and some view its rise as threatening America's dominance in the Pacific region. Traditional partners like Japan and the UK, have returned to the Pacific region to remind South Pacific countries to commit to the norms and rules of the existing regional order (*ibid*). In addition to this new era of strategic competition, the Pacific islands have played a role in creating a more complex Pacific region. Since 2009, South Pacific countries have followed a diplomatic process described as the 'New Pacific Diplomacy' through which they have become more assertive and less reliant on traditional partners and actively engage new partners and pursue their interests in regional and global arenas (Fry & Tarte, 2015).

Indonesia's interests in the Pacific region are primarily aimed at preventing West Papua from getting re-enlisted in the United Nations decolonisation list. From 1976-1988, South Pacific countries campaigned strongly for decolonisation and self-determination. Indonesia attempted to limit the effects of campaigns for independence for East Timor and West Papua by intensifying its engagement in the Pacific region during this time (Crocombe, 2007). In 2001, Indonesia re-engaged in the Pacific via the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), through its role as a dialogue partner. Indonesia had accepted the PIF's invitation to be a dialogue partner. The PIF had aimed to engage Indonesia in peaceful dialogue on the future of the country and to resolve the human rights issue in West Papua. Forming a backdrop to this renewed Indonesian engagement, was the event that saw the three Pacific island countries of Vanuatu, Tuvalu and

Nauru, raising the West Papua independence issue for the first time at the UN in September 2000. Timor's separation from Indonesia in 1999 after twenty-five years under Indonesian control, was the precedent for the Pacific islands to push for the issue at the UN (MacLellan, 2007). From 2011-2014, Indonesia re-engaged in the Pacific region by becoming an observer in the sub-regional grouping called the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG). Indonesia aimed to prevent a pro-independence group from West Papua, called the West Papua National Coalition for Independence (WPNCL), from gaining MSG membership (Elmslie & Webb-Gannon, 2014). Since becoming an associate member of the MSG in 2015, Indonesia has been instrumental in preventing a second independence group from West Papua, called the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP), from gaining MSG membership (Lawson, 2016). A membership in the MSG is a vital step for West Papua to get enlisted on the UN decolonisation list (*ibid*).

It is interesting to look into possible reasons for Indonesia to retain West Papua. Indonesia relies on West Papua's huge region to relieve overpopulation on Indonesian islands, and West Papua is economically beneficial as it is rich in mineral wealth, gas reserves and rainforests (Crocombe, 2007, pp. 281-301). For instance, the American Freeport Gold Mine found in West Papua is the largest gold and second largest copper mine in the world, and contributed around four percent of Indonesia's GDP in 2016 alone (Batubara, 2017). Furthermore, Indonesian control over West Papua has been largely backed by America and Australia since 1962, when West Papua was temporarily placed under Indonesian administration by the UN after the exit of Dutch colonisers. The Act of Free Choice in 1969 has been considered by some a forced annexation of West Papua by Indonesia; one that was backed by America and Australia. West Papua was used as a pawn in the geostrategic game played by America and Australia in the early years of Indonesia's independence for different reasons: the US to prevent Indonesia from "going communist" by a growing Russian influence in the country, and for Australia, to prevent Indonesia from turning into a security risk next door (Crocombe, 2007, p. 283).

Commentators have highlighted that China's rise has drawn Australia's and New Zealand's attention away from Indonesia's growing political and economic influence in the Pacific region (Bohane, 2018a, McGarry, 2017). Indonesia has swayed Melanesian politics on decolonisation issues especially in the last five years, effectively crippling the MSG's core work to decolonise all of Melanesia (Bohane, 2018b). Indonesia has increased its political influence in Melanesia and the MSG to prevent West Papua from enlisting on the UN decolonisation list (McGarry, 2017). While Indonesia was observer in the MSG from 2011-

2014, it was influential in changing the rules for MSG membership application, which resulted in the rejection of WPNCL's application in 2014 (Elmslie & Webb-Gannon, 2014). As an associate member of MSG from 2015, Indonesia has courted member states Fiji, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, resulting in a division in the MSG on the question of accepting ULMWP as a member of the organisation (Lawson, 2016). Some argue that Indonesian influence threatens Melanesian stability, and that failing to address the effects of Indonesian activities in Melanesia could displace Australia as the "security partner of choice" for the South Pacific countries (Bohane, 2018a). Indonesia has begun to move away from its Melanesian-centric activities in the last few years and has extended its political and economic reach to Polynesia and Micronesia (Blades, 2018). Some argue that Australia and New Zealand have reason to fear the regional manoeuvres of Indonesia, who is showing strategic interests in the Pacific region, as their engagement includes national and transnational policing assistance (Baker, 2018). Bohane (2018a) claims that Indonesia is "the elephant in the Pacific room" and not China.

Some argue that while Indonesia has been able to influence Melanesia for the short term, Indonesia will always be faced with the long-term problem of Melanesians raising the West Papua issues at the national, MSG, and UN level. Indonesia will slowly lose the debate in Melanesia if Melanesians continue to push for West Papua issues to be addressed (McGarry, 2017). Vanuatu, for example, has been reported to have turned to China to counter Indonesian influence on its West Papua policy (Bohane, 2018b).

Indonesia was seen lobbying South Pacific countries in 2018 for a seat at the UN Security Council, where they hoped to 'promote world peace' (Anyia, 2018). While strengthening its position in the international arena through gaining Pacific island support, Indonesia's claim on territorial integrity and respect for sovereignty with respect to West Papua has shown weakness in the UN's responsibility to protect norm (Lawson, 2016).

Indonesia's engagement with South Pacific countries is an important part of Pacific regional international relations. It is apparent in the existing literature that Indonesian engagement with South Pacific countries is growing. Indonesia's role in the MSG has been well documented, but its role in the PIF and PIDF needs further assessment. For these reasons, this paper assesses Indonesia's engagement with South Pacific countries and their effects on international relations in the Pacific region. It will be the first to assess Indonesian political manoeuvres in the Pacific region in the past decade. The following section investigates Indonesia's recent engagement with South Pacific countries, starting with the Pacific Islands Forum.

1. Indonesia in the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)

Indonesia engaged with the PIF to serve its national interests. Since Indonesia became a Forum dialogue partner in 2001, it has never missed a Post Forum Dialogue (PFD) meeting. Indonesia's focus on active participation in the PIF diverges from its generally Asian-centric activities and represents a focussed move into the Pacific region through its 'look east' policy. Much of Indonesia's foreign policies were focused on the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), as it was a founding member of the organisation. Indonesia aims to get closer to Pacific countries "especially to maintain the integrity of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia" continuing Sukarno's policy for a unitary Indonesia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Indonesia, 2015). Indonesia also joined the PIF to improve its image by gaining support from the South Pacific countries in international organisations (*ibid.*).

In 2015 the PIF made an attempt to address human rights issues in West Papua after it had been dropped from its agenda for nine years, having last been discussed by island leaders in 2006. PIF leaders "recognised Indonesia's sovereignty over the Papuan provinces" but expressed concerns on the human rights issues and the Forum Chair, PNG's Prime Minister Peter O'Neill, was asked to convey the views of the PIF leaders to Jakarta and consult on a fact-finding mission to the region to find out more on the situation (PIFS, 2015). O'Neill confirmed in 2016 that he had written to the Indonesian President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo as requested by the PIF and that Indonesia was willing to cooperate in a dialogue (Radio New Zealand International, 2016b). However, Jakarta indicated that it would not welcome a Forum delegation and found the term "fact-finding" offensive (Radio New Zealand International, 2016d). Australia, New Zealand and PNG also disapproved of the fact finding mission, and chose instead to maintain good relations with Indonesia (Radio New Zealand International, 2015). The fact-finding mission did not happen as planned in 2016.

A second attempt by PIF to address the issue of human rights in West Papua was made in 2016. PIF leaders commended the inclusion of West Papua as one of five policy priorities that emerged through its 'Framework for Pacific Regionalism', which is a policy framework that allows for regional public consultations on various issues in the Pacific region (PIFS, 2016). The largest number of submissions made through this public policy process in 2015 and 2016 called for action on West Papua's human rights abuses (Maclellan, 2016). PIF leaders expressed that there were political sensitivities involved with the human rights issue in West Papua (PIFS, 2016). The sensitivities came from member countries like Australia, New Zealand, PNG, and Fiji (Maclellan, 2016). The West Papua issue stayed on the Forum's agenda

though, and the PIF was tasked with engaging in constructive dialogue with Indonesia (PIFS, 2016).

In 2017, PIF's attempts to address the West Papua human rights issue made some progress. Dialogue with Indonesia resulted in PIF taking part in an Election Visit Programme to observe the 2017 Indonesian provincial elections. The PIF team observed the elections in Jayapura and Manokwari, found in the provinces of Papua and West Papua. Later in December, staff from the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat attended the 10th Bali Democracy Forum on an invite from Indonesia and delivered a statement at the plenary session (PIFS, n.d.). Pacific Islands Forum leaders expressed support for "constructive engagement" with Indonesia over elections and human rights, and to "continue dialogue in an open and constructive manner" (PIFS, 2017). The 2018 Forum Communique did not differ from the contents of the 2017 communique concerning the issue (PIFS, 2018).

Some South Pacific countries have shown dissatisfaction with PIF's alleged lack of commitment on West Papua issues by pushing for these issues at the UN independent of the PIF. In October 2015, Tonga and Solomon Islands raised the West Papua human rights issue at the UN General Assembly, following nine years of the issue being dropped from the PIF agenda. In reply, Indonesia refuted the claims and reiterated that, as the fourth largest democracy globally, it had human rights protections systems in place (Ministry of Information and Communications Tonga, 2015). Three days later, seven Pacific islands (Nauru, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Marshall Islands, Tuvalu, Tonga, and Palau) raised the human rights issues in West Papua at the UNGA (Walsh, 2016). By taking the issues to the UN, South Pacific countries have forced the issue to be kept on the PIF agenda. I will now discuss Indonesia's engagement with several of the Pacific island countries in the PIF, starting with Melanesian countries.

1.1. Indonesia's Bilateral engagement with Melanesian countries in the PIF

Co-operation agreements have been established between Indonesia and PNG in a number of areas. Under the 1986 Treaty of Mutual Respect, Friendship, and Cooperation, several kinds of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) have been signed in a wide range of areas, including economic cooperation, capacity building for oil and energy exploration, and to combat cross border crimes, drug smuggling and terrorism. Most cooperation agreements enforce the respect for territorial integrity and non-interference, such as the Plan of Action for the Implementation of Comprehensive Partnership of 2013 (Farneubun, 2016).

Leaders from PNG usually express official support for Indonesian sovereignty. In 2008, PNG's then-Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare reportedly silenced the West Papua issue following his appointment by the Forum in 2007 to discuss West Papua with Indonesia. (Radio New Zealand International, 2008). This was because as early as 2002, Somare had stated that he respected Indonesia's sovereignty and regarded the West Papua issue as an internal matter for Indonesia (Pacific Islands Report, 2002). Consequently, there was no inclusion of West Papua in the Forum discussion in 2008 (Radio New Zealand International, 2008). However, in 2015, O'Neill asked President Jokowi to fulfil the promise made to him by his former president, Susilo "SBY" Bambang Yudhoyono, to reduce troops in West Papua and to allow more autonomy for the West Papuans (ABC News, 2015). He was the first PNG Prime Minister to express the desire for West Papua's autonomy, pointing to a broader criteria set under the special autonomy status of Papua granted by Indonesia in 2001.

In 2018, Indonesia reminded PNG of established agreements to respect territorial integrity and non-interference (Radio New Zealand International, 2018b). This came after O'Neill encouraged regional countries to take West Papua to the UN Decolonisation Committee, during a Forum-organised public lecture on Pacific regionalism held in Fiji in June (Radio New Zealand International, 2018b). Later, at Jakarta's request, PNG's Foreign Minister Rimbink Pato met with his Indonesian counterpart, Retno Marsudi, to reaffirm his country's support for Indonesian control over West Papua. At those meetings Pato claimed that some misreporting had been done regarding his country's stance on West Papua at the public lecture in Fiji (Radio New Zealand International, 2018c).

During its suspension from the PIF in the 2009-2014 period, Fiji actively pursued stronger ties with Indonesia. Fiji sought observer status in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2010. Then in 2011, Fiji opened embassies in Indonesia, Brazil and South Africa, and became a member of the Non Aligned Movement (NAM). In 2011, Fiji's foreign minister Inoke Kubuobola thanked Indonesia for its instrumental role in Fiji's admission to full membership in the NAM, and asked for the same treatment to be given to Fiji in its application to ASEAN (Ministry of Foreign Affairs- Fiji, 2011). Indonesian former President SBY, in a meeting with Fiji's Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama, confirmed that as Chair of ASEAN he would convey his support of Fiji's membership application to ASEAN in its forthcoming summit (Loanakadavu, 2011). In May 2011, a Development Cooperation Agreement (DCA) was signed to endorse the cooperation of the two countries in a wide range of sectors including agriculture, fisheries, trade, education, defence, legal, and tourism (Ministry of Foreign Affairs- Fiji, 2011).

Deeper security cooperation between Fiji and Indonesia was sought under the DCA agreement established. A Fiji-Indonesia Police Cooperation memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed to enhance training and technical assistance in terrorism and national security (Nisha, 2011). Since then, the agreement has been renewed twice with current Defence Minister Ratu Inoke Kubuobola signing on Fiji's behalf on both occasions. The agreement has morphed from training police officers to sharing intelligence and an Indonesian-made weaponry system that includes arms and ships in 2017, indicating shifts towards military and naval cooperation (ANTARA News, 2016).

Other areas of partnership were established between Fiji and Indonesia. In April 2014, Fiji received funding from Indonesia to host the UN Pacific Regional Seminar of the Special Committee on Decolonization for the fourth time (United Nations, 2014). For the elections in Fiji in 2014, Indonesia provided financial and technical support, and co-chaired the Multinational Observer Group with Australia (Barlow, 2014). Indonesia also did likewise for the 2018 elections (Bolanavanua, 2018). Indonesia has also collaborated with the Fijian Elections Office, and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance to run an inaugural election management programme at the University of the South Pacific from 2019 onwards (USP news, 2018). In 2016 Indonesia responded to relieve the effects of Cyclone Winston by providing disaster aid of US\$5 million and helped rebuild Queen Victoria School – an elite colonial-era boarding school – with deployed engineer troops (Ministry Of Communication And Information Technology Republic of Indonesia, 2016). It is interesting that Indonesia chose this particular school to rebuild, since the school is reputable for breeding some of Fiji's prominent leaders such as Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara.

Unsurprisingly, Fiji's government has supported Indonesia's sovereignty over West Papua at the PIF since returning to the Forum after suspension. For instance, when Vanuatu asked member states of the Pacific Islands Forum to support its UN resolution to have West Papua enlisted on C24 during a Forum Foreign Minister's Meeting in 2011, Fiji was one of the countries that objected (Cain, 2018). Fiji's interest in pursuing economic gains and gaining a broader global reach has made it sideline decolonisation for its Pacific island neighbours.

Vanuatu has firmly supported independence for West Papua. Vanuatu raised the West Papua issue at the UN from 2016-2018 calling for investigations into human rights abuses and to relist West Papua on the UN decolonisation list. Vanuatu was instrumental in pushing the West Papua issue in PIF from 2016-2018. For many years Vanuatu has been the home of various exiled West Papuans, including leading activists and pro-independence figures

(Elmslie & Webb-Gannon, 2014). The government recently offered use of a public building to house the ULMWP headquarters in Port Vila (Admin, 2017)

In 2010, Vanuatu began to weaken its stance on West Papua issues. Jakarta began courting Vanuatu's then-Prime Minister Sato Kilman with lavish trips to Indonesia and closer ties between the two states were forged. Kilman preferred an open dialogue with Indonesia on West Papua. In 2011, Vanuatu signed a Development Cooperation Agreement (DCA) where bilateral cooperation was strengthened in several fields including agriculture, marine affairs, fisheries, forestry, education, trade, technical cooperation, tourism, transportation and police, (Pacific Islands Report, 2011). Kilman resigned ahead of a possible ouster via a vote of no confidence motion in 2013 and was replaced by Moana Carcasses Kalosil (Dorney, 2013).

Carcasses renewed Vanuatu's support for West Papua issues. Carcasses distanced himself immediately from Indonesia when he came into office and cancelled some deals under the cooperation agreement (Dorney, 2013). At the UN in 2013, Carcasses made new appeals for a UN special representative to be appointed to observe West Papua's human rights abuses, and for an investigation into the legitimacy of the West Papua annexation process in 1969 (Graue, 2013).

In 2015, Kilman was again instrumental in Vanuatu re-engaging with Indonesia. Soon after Indonesia helped Vanuatu recover from Cyclone Pam by donating USD\$2 million, Kilman visited Jakarta as Foreign Minister and planned to open a Vanuatu embassy in Jakarta (Jarkata Globe, 2015). His return saw him sacked as Foreign Minister because he "undermined the government's support for West Papua" (Pacific Beat, 2015). Kilman later ousted Joe Natuman in a no confidence motion to become Prime Minister. Opposition leader, Edward Natapei, believed Kilman's timely ascent to Prime Minister involved collusions between Indonesia and Kilman in ousting Natuman (Bule, 2015). It was timely given that there was a forthcoming MSG meeting that was going to consider West Papua independence group's membership, and Kilman would become voting head of the Vanuatu government during the summit (Bule, 2015).

Since 2016, Vanuatu has been pushing for the West Papua issue to be addressed. In 2016, Charlot Salwai became Vanuatu's Prime Minister. Salwai is a strong backer of the West Papua independence cause, as evidenced by Vanuatu's push for West Papua to be addressed at the Pacific Islands Forum and the UN when he took office. In 2017, Salwai urged the UNGA to allow West Papuans the right to self-determination and freedom from colonialism. He also accused the UN of "turning a deaf ear" to the human rights atrocities in West Papua (Doherty, 2017). In 2018, Vanuatu asked for PIF member states to support its UNGA resolution to have

West Papua relisted on the UN decolonisation list. Vanuatu's proposal was "met with demur" by Fiji, PNG, and Australia, while the other countries made no comment (Radio New Zealand International, 2018d). Moreover, Vanuatu urged the UN to address the grievances of Papuans. Indonesia accused Vanuatu of repeatedly supporting separatist movements, labelling it as inexcusable behaviour (*ibid*). Indonesia also labelled Vanuatu's actions to raise West Papua as an "act of hostility" that had "no place in the UN system" and was a violation against UN principles (Radio New Zealand International, 2018e). Indonesia stated that it would defend its territorial integrity like any other sovereign nation.

Solomon Islands pursued closer ties with Indonesia after former Prime Minister Gordon Lilo visited Jakarta. In 2013, Solomon Islands then- Prime Minister Gordon Lilo was supportive of West Papua issues. Later in 2013, he became the first Solomon Islands Prime Minister to visit Indonesia. He met Indonesia's then President SBY, who emphasized prosperous development in West Papua and the benefits of ongoing trade relations with Indonesia. He also suggested relations between the two countries could be improved through economic partnerships and capacity building cooperation in the fields of energy, media, village development and culture and arts (Radio New Zealand International, 2013). When Lilo returned, the Solomon Islands policy on West Papua changed to support Indonesian sovereignty over West Papua (Elmslie & Webb-Gannon, 2014)

Manasseh Sogovare, who became the Solomon Islands Prime Minister in 2014, was instrumental in raising West Papua issues at PIF and the UN. In 2016, Sogavare claimed that Indonesia had failed to respond to requests from the Pacific Islands Forum for engagement over Papua (Radio New Zealand International, 2016a). At the 2016 UNGA, he challenged the legality of the Act of Free Choice (Radio New Zealand International, 2016c). In 2017, he urged the UN Human Rights Commission to investigate human rights abuses in West Papua (Anya, 2018).

The Solomon Islands forged closer ties with Indonesia after Prime Minister Rick Houenipwela "Hou" came into office in late 2017. following an Indonesian-funded fact finding trip for a Solomon government-led delegation to Indonesia's Papua and West Papua provinces in April 2018 Solomon Islands developed a new policy on West Papua (Sasako, 2018). At the UNGA in September 2018, Hou announced that his country respected Indonesian sovereignty and territorial integrity (SIBC, 2018).

1.2. Indonesia's bilateral engagement with countries in Micronesia and Polynesia

Nauru-Indonesia relations have developed significantly since Indonesia established diplomatic ties with Nauru in 2012. These bilateral ties were aimed to advance cooperation in several sectors including climate change, disaster management and south-south cooperation. Marlene Moses, Nauru's permanent representative to the UN at the time expressed appreciation for Indonesia's leading discussions on climate change issues at the organisation (Maulia, 2012). In 2016, Indonesian government delegates visited Nauru to strengthen bilateral relations and to visit the Australian-funded refugee centre on the island. The refugee center is significant to Jakarta as it is a transit point for many asylum seekers in Indonesia trying to reach Australia (Radio New Zealand International, 2016e).

Relations between Nauru and Indonesia were strengthened with subsequent diplomatic visits. In 2017, Nauru's President Baron Waqa made an unprecedented visit to Indonesia, becoming the first president to visit the country. Development cooperation on management of marine resources was discussed, with a focus on illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing. Waqa also extended an invitation to Indonesia to attend Nauru's fiftieth independence day celebrations (Hermansyah, 2017). Indonesian officials did attend, and contributed a Papuan music band for the occasion, a form of cultural diplomacy intended to suggest Indonesian cultural links with the Pacific. Indonesia also used the occasion to lobby for support, from other Pacific island administrators in attendance, for its UN Security Council application for the 2019-2020 period. Waqa expressed appreciation to Indonesia for developing Papua and West Papua (ANTARA News, 2018).

Indonesia also established diplomatic relations with Tuvalu in 2012 (Maulia, 2012). Indonesia was involved in infrastructure development, such as plans to build a convention centre (Blades, 2018). In 2018, Tuvalu supported Indonesian sovereignty in West Papua, expressing gratitude to Indonesia for developing West Papua (ANTARA News, 2018). However, Tuvalu still remains concerned about human rights issues in West Papua, evidenced by it raising the issue at the UN in September 2018 (*ibid*).

Samoa formed closer relations with Indonesia in 2017. A trade relationship was established and technical cooperation was renewed between the two countries in 2017 (Radio New Zealand International, 2017c). Improved bilateral cooperation was earmarked for various sectors, like fisheries, tourism, natural disaster management and agriculture. Capacity building was also discussed for information, communication and technology fields. Samoan Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi expressed support for Indonesia's candidacy for the UNSC, stating that Indonesia maintains regional and global peace (Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Republic of Indonesia 2017b). In 2018, before the Pacific Islands Forum summit, he also

suggested that some Pacific leaders sensationalized the alleged West Papua abuses (Blades 2018).

The president of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Peter Christian, also forged ties with Indonesia. In 2018, he made an unprecedented presidential visit to Indonesia (Blades 2018). During the visit, negotiations were completed for visa-free entry between the two nations for diplomatic passport holders, and Indonesia offered scholarships and state-produced N-219 aircraft for inter-island transport assistance to FSM. Indonesia also announced plans to open a consulate in FSM (Radio New Zealand International 2018a). Bilateral cooperation between the countries were agreed in a range of areas, including maritime, economic, diplomatic and education sectors (Xinhua, 2018).

Kiribati has received assistance from Indonesia in several areas. Indonesia has assisted in human resources capacity development through the provision of scholarships, training and short courses. Plans are underway for Kiribati to buy two aircrafts worth US\$1.7 million each from Indonesia. Indonesia's interests in Kiribati are in fisheries and copra sectors (Ministry of Foreign Affairs- Republic of Indonesia 2017a). Indonesia also plans to build a sports stadium in Kiribati (Blades 2018).

Following the 2018 PIF Summit in Nauru, Indonesia announced that it would strengthen its engagement with Pacific countries, particularly in areas of maritime cooperation (Ministry Of Foreign Affairs - Republic of Indonesia 2018). Indonesia released plans to hold its first Indonesia-South Pacific Forum in 2019 to discuss Indonesia's projects for the Pacific which include combatting IUU and addressing marine plastics by providing technology for biodegradable plastics (Komai, 2018). The new Forum proposal from Indonesia is similar to the West Pacific Forum that it proposed in 2001 as it is a response to the Pacific island's initiative of raising the West Papua issue (Maclellan, 2007). Now that I have looked at the PIF, I will turn to the PIDF and MSG.

2. Indonesia in the Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF)

This section discusses Indonesian engagement with the Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF). Indonesia was keen to participate in the PIDF soon after its establishment in Fiji in 2013. This was despite controversies surrounding PIDF's establishment such as: it was initiated by the Fijian military regime, it excluded Australia and New Zealand, and it potentially undermined the work of the Pacific Islands Forum (Fry & Tarte, 2015). Former Indonesian President SBY attended the second PIDF meeting in 2014 as chief guest, during his first state visit to the South Pacific region (Radio New Zealand International, 2014) .

President SBY offered assistance to PIDF in various sectors. Indonesia pledged assistance in capacity building programs in various areas like disaster mitigation and management. A pledge of US\$20 million over five years was made for coping with the effects of disasters and climate change. It was also anticipated that trade between Indonesia and Pacific island countries would triple to US\$1 billion over several years (Radio New Zealand International, 2014).

3. Indonesia in the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG)

3.1. Indonesia's Melanesia claim

The following section discusses Indonesia's political influence in the MSG. The Melanesian Spearhead Group is a "Melanesian-only" bloc in the Pacific region. Its membership include the Melanesian states of Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, and the Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste (FLNKS), a pro-independence group from New Caledonia. The Melanesian states are differentiated from those of Polynesia and Micronesia along ethnic, cultural and political lines. Melanesian ethno-political solidarity is also expressed in the idea of a Melanesian Way and a Melanesian 'brotherhood'. The idea of a shared Melanesian identity and solidarity has been consolidated in the MSG (Lawson, 2016).

West Papuans' independence claims are based on ethnic lines. West Papuans identify themselves as Melanesians, and not Indonesians. In terms of identity, sociocultural practices and tradition, West Papuans are more similar to Melanesians than to Asians. West Papuans' cultural identity as Melanesians has gained wide support among the MSG members (Elmslie & Webb-Gannon, 2014). This encouraged West Papua independence group to apply for MSG membership from 2008 (Lawson, 2016).

Indonesia's counter to West Papuans' Melanesia claim is to identify itself as 'of the Pacific' and a Melanesian country. Indeed it has represented itself as the "Father of the Nesias", referring to the path that Papuans and Austronesians historically followed from Taiwan, and via Indonesia into the other 'nesias', that is, Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia (Elmslie & Webb-Gannon, 2014). Indonesia claims to be a Melanesian country by virtue of having ethnic Melanesian citizens in its five provinces of Papua, West Papua, Maluku, North Maluku, and East Nusa Tenggara. This unique formulation - that five provinces qualifies Indonesia as a Melanesian state - was used as a strategy by Indonesia to apply for observer status in the MSG in 2011 and gain MSG membership in 2014 (Carter & Firth, 2016). In addition, Indonesia hosted a Melanesian Cultural Festival in East Nusa Tenggara in October 2015 to celebrate its

Melanesian culture (Pewart, 2016). Indonesia continues to push its claim as a Melanesian and Pacific nation, but Kabutaulaka (2016) warned Melanesians of being persuaded by Jakarta into accepting this claim, arguing:

Jakarta is stretching the boundaries and definitions of Melanesia and Pacific Islands to suit its political, economic and strategic agendas. It deploys identities, albeit misconceived, as a political tool of inclusiveness [...] Indonesia is *not* Melanesia. (Kabutaulaka, 2016).

Indonesian administrators claim the country has the largest Melanesian population. In 2011, Indonesia claimed to have 11 million Melanesians living in five provinces when it was applying for observer status at the MSG. Fiji accepted Indonesia's claim in 2011 when, as MSG chair, foreign minister Inoke Kubuobola echoed this claim in media reports (Radio New Zealand International, 2011). However, 'Melanesian West Papuans make up only 0.67 percent of Indonesia's total population of over 260 million' (Kabutaulaka, 2016). Furthermore, population figures are highly contested and unverified in recent national census figures. For instance, while earlier population censuses distinguished Papuans (Melanesians) and non-Papuans, the 2010 census enumerated everybody as "West Papuans" (Kabutaulaka, 2016).

Indonesia's claim to be a Melanesian country is one of its oldest diplomatic strategies. Indonesia used this claim in the 1950s and early 1960s against the Dutch in their debate and war over who owned the former Dutch New Guinea (West Papua). Today however, in the Indonesian public, an Indonesian would generally oppose being called a Melanesian, and oppose a West Papuan claiming to be Melanesian (Blades, 2014). Lawson (2016) highlighted that Indonesians have derogatory attitudes towards Melanesians, regarding Papuans as uncivilised, and West Papuans are resented and alienated as a consequence.

3.2. Melanesian Spearhead Group membership

Indonesia was granted observer status at the MSG in 2011. It had used several strategies to get into the MSG as an observer. As discussed previously, Indonesia claimed that it was a Melanesian state and of the Pacific, and began to lobby MSG members for support in its bid. Fiji and PNG were especially supportive of Indonesia's bid to join the MSG, having forged closer trade and economic ties with Indonesia (Lawson, 2016). In 2011, Fiji's PM Bainimarama expressed that "Papua comes under the governance of Indonesia, no matter what, if we bring

in West Papua separately, it doesn't make sense" (Kabutaulaka, 2016). Realpolitik negotiations resulted in Indonesia's gaining MSG observer status in 2011 (Elmslie & Webb-Gannon, 2014).

During the 2013 summit, with the support of FLNKS as host, the independence group WPNCL applied for MSG observer status. The WPNCL was established in Vanuatu in 2008, and hoped for the same treatment that FLNKS was accorded by leaders at the MSG (Lawson, 2016). In the 2011-2014 periods, Indonesia was an MSG observer. During the summit Vanuatu and Solomon Islands supported the WPNCL's application, and Fiji was reluctant to sign off on the application as Chair. Indonesian representatives invited the MSG leaders to a Foreign Ministers Meeting in their country "to view and better understand the developments in all parts of Indonesia, including in Papua and West Papua provinces" (Melanesian Spearhead Group Secretariat, 2013b). This resulted in the MSG's decision to postpone the WPNCL application pending a report from the FMM visit (Elmslie & Webb-Gannon, 2014).

Vanuatu, with pro-West Papua PM Carcasses and foreign minister Natapei, boycotted the mission. They were not pleased to discover that the delegation would not meet any West Papuan groups as earlier promised by the Indonesian government (ABC News, 2014). Their claims proved true as the MSG delegates only spent half a day in West Papua (Elmslie & Webb-Gannon, 2014). In addition, Indonesian authorities reportedly arrested some West Papuan activists who tried to contact the MSG delegates (Lawson, 2016).

Indonesia's influence during the FMM visit influenced MSG's decision on WPNCL's application. Fiji, as MSG Chair in 2013, had Foreign Minister Kubuobola heading the delegation during the visit (Elmslie & Webb-Gannon, 2014). Upon returning, the MSG and Indonesia issued a joint statement to reiterate the respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity (Lawson, 2016). Moreover, the WPNCL application was rejected on the grounds that it did not sufficiently represent Papuans. A new rule was set by the MSG for future applications for West Papua: all independence groups outside Indonesia and other Melanesians from inside Indonesia need to collectively apply with the approval of the Indonesian government. This contradicted the FLNKS membership as it did not need approval from France in its application (Elmslie & Webb-Gannon, 2014).

In 2015, a second West Papua independence group, ULMWP, applied for MSG observer while Indonesia pushed for associate membership. The ULMWP was a new, larger and more representative group than the WPNCL. The ULMWP application was accompanied by a petition signed by 55,000 West Papuans (Lawson, 2016). During the summit, Fiji and PNG showed support for Indonesian sovereignty. Vanuatu was represented by the newly appointed pro-Indonesia Kilman. Sogavare was back for a third time as Honiara leader and was

pro-West Papua, and the FLNKS was Chair. That equated to three in Indonesia's camp. Realpolitik negotiations resulted in the MSG's decision in 2015 to grant ULMWP observer status while Indonesia got elevated to associate member (*ibid*). Furthermore, the MSG set a new criterion for Indonesia's membership. Indonesia would have to be represented by its administration and by one governor from any of the five Indonesian provinces with Melanesian populations. Indonesian President Jokowi appointed a Papuan governor, Franzalbert Joku, to represent Indonesia in the MSG and Pacific regional architecture (Poling, 2015). In 2015, Jokowi released West Papuan separatist leader Filep Karma after serving a fifteen year jail term, and lifted a forty year ban on foreign journalists entering the Papua region, which signalled a peaceful strategy towards the Free Papua Movement (Talbot, 2015).

Sogavare, dissatisfied with the decision on West Papua at the MSG and PIF, formed the 'Pacific Coalition for West Papua' in 2014 to advance the West Papua issue in other forums. It included Tonga, Tuvalu, Nauru, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, FLNKS, ULMWP, and the Pacific Islands Alliance of NGO (PIANGO). The Pacific Coalition of West Papua raised the West Papua issues of decolonisation and human rights abuses at international summits such as the UN General Assembly and meetings of the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) group of countries (Dateline Pacific, 2017).

3.3. MSG Security

As previously mentioned, Indonesia had established a Development Cooperation Agreement (DCA) with both Fiji and Vanuatu in 2011. Fiji progressed to sign a Fiji-Indonesia Police Cooperation MOU which subsequently morphed over the years with two new renewal agreements. Vanuatu on the other hand, took a different approach on the agreement. In 2012, under the leadership of Kilman, the Australian Federal Police was expelled from Vanuatu following a diplomatic feud with Australia after one of Kilman's senior aides was arrested in Sydney. Soon after, an Indonesian Hercules aircraft carrying military equipment landed in Port Vila (Radio New Zealand International, 2012). Kilman was sacked for lack of support for West Papua, and was replaced by Carcasses, who immediately cancelled the defence cooperation agreement with Indonesia (Dorney, 2013). Indonesia attempted to donate police uniforms to Vanuatu in 2013 but the offer was rejected (Pacific Beat, 2013).

The 2011 MSG summit, focussed on security cooperation, and Department of Peacekeeping Operation (DPKO) was proposed. A Humanitarian and Emergency Response Force would be formed under the DPKO. This Force would be trained to respond to threats to regional and international borders, natural disaster effects, and internal conflicts within the

MSG countries. The Bougainville mission and the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) had successfully combined security forces from across the Pacific region, and this was the model for the proposed Force (Blades, 2011). In addition, a Regional Police Academy (RPA) and a Formed Police Unit (FPU) were proposed for the training of police from the MSG countries to combat national and transnational crimes. In 2013, the DPKO was established in the MSG Secretariat in Vanuatu. Furthermore, an inaugural Special MSG Police Commissioners Conference was held in Vanuatu to pool ideas for the establishment of the proposed RPA and FPU (Melanesian Spearhead Group Secretariat, 2013a). MSG conducted the inaugural Police Ministers Meeting to develop the RPA and FPU proposal in 2016, and to improve policing issues (Melanesian Spearhead Group Secretariat, 2018). Hence, the DPKO is the section in the MSG that deals with security issues.

Indonesia began making significant contributions to MSG security initiatives from 2014, even before it became associate member of the MSG. It donated USD\$500,000 for the establishment of the RPA. An interim RPA was established in Fiji, in Nasese (Talebula, 2014). After 2015, Indonesia contributed significantly by providing trainings and capacity building in policing. In March 2017, Indonesia hosted a meeting of police ministers and commissioners from MSG countries (Radio New Zealand International, 2017a). Following this meeting, the Solomon Islands Police Force announced that it would partner with its Indonesian counterpart to advance its national policing, as RAMSI was scheduled to withdraw in 2017 (Radio New Zealand International, 2017b). Australia and New Zealand would continue a policing program in Solomon Islands after RAMSI left (Batley, 2017). A draft MOU was to be signed between Solomon Islands and Indonesia and aimed at combatting transnational crimes and building international police capacity (Radio New Zealand International, 2017b). The MOU has not been signed by the Solomon Islands administration. In 2017, Indonesian police trained its PNG counterparts in preparation for the 2018 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting to be held in PNG (Radio New Zealand International, 2017d). This was in response to a request by PNG in 2016 to the MSG to assist in policing for the event (Melanesian Spearhead Group Secretariat, 2018).

In 2018, the MSG security plans showed some progress. An MOU was signed to commence the FPU (Melanesian Spearhead Group Secretariat, 2018). However, the Regional Police Academy (RPA) had not commenced. Speculation was rife that Fiji, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands were debating where the RPA headquarters ought to be located. Proposals for hosting the RPA headquarters were put forward by all three countries. The Solomon Islands put forward a proposal in 2015, during Sogavare's term, to host the institution in near Honiara,

where the former operational base for RAMSI is located. Since then Fiji has instead progressed a military-oriented Regional Humanitarian and Disaster Rehabilitation Centre at Blackrock in Nadi. It serves as a pre-deployment training centre for troops to be deployed on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief duty. Fiji administrators have signalled that the centre is open to development proposals, though Indonesia has not responded (Naguilevu, 2018).

4. Indonesia's engagement influences bilateral relations of South Pacific countries

This section examines the influence of Indonesia's engagement on bilateral relations of South Pacific countries. The MSG has seen a rift between member countries on the decision to grant Indonesia membership and not West Papua independence groups. The split could be described as *realpolitik* versus MSG solidarity. Recently, though, an underlying factor for the MSG split has been intensive lobbying by Jakarta.

In 2018, a diplomatic row emerged between Honiara and Suva regarding the granting of MSG membership to Indonesia. Honiara accused Suva of bullying MSG members into accepting Indonesia's membership application in their 2015 summit and Suva defended the actions saying that it was a decision made by consensus at the MSG summit and that Honiara was Chair during the said summit. In addition, Honiara accused Fiji of conveniently bending the membership rules to grant Indonesia membership and to reject membership sought by both West Papua independence groups. The feud ended up on social media between former Prime Minister of Solomon Islands Manasseh Sogavare and former Fiji foreign minister Inoke Kibuobola (Rika, 2018). To backtrack, Sogavare was Chair in 2015, and by the time the meeting occurred, Fiji, PNG and Vanuatu's Kilman were already on Indonesia's side.

5. Indonesia's engagement influences South Pacific countries' relations with China

This section examines the effects of Indonesia's engagement on Pacific islands' relations with China. In a unique case in the Pacific region, Vanuatu has 'turned to China' to counter Indonesian influence (Bohane, 2018a). In 2010, Vanuatu passed a 'Wantok Blong Yumi Bill' that committed Vanuatu to supporting the West Papua independence movement. Vanuatu has continued to push for the West Papua issue domestically. For instance, Vanuatu hosted a conference in 2014 to unify all independence groups from West Papua for a second application to the MSG for membership. Indonesia warned Vanuatu about straining their bilateral relations if they hosted the conference (Cullwick, 2014). In response, Vanuatu began to intensify engagements with China. This was evident with the recent opening of a large

refurbished Chinese embassy and a Chinese-funded sports stadium and wharf in Vanuatu (Garae, 2017). This is not the first time Vanuatu had been warned by Indonesia about its support for separatist from Papua, as Indonesia had done likewise back in 2003, and Vanuatu had responded in a similar way. In this way, Vanuatu prevented an Indonesian move to influence its West Papua policy by actively engaging China to keep Indonesia away. Vanuatu is the only country that has shown this pattern of international relations in the Pacific region.

6. Indonesia influences Australia's Pacific regional response

This section discusses Australian response to Indonesia's activities in the Pacific region. Australian policy to re-engage in the South Pacific in recent years is aimed at protecting its image as "partner of choice" for the South Pacific countries. In 2014, Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Julie Bishop expressed that Australia needed to move away from responsibility, to partnership, in the Pacific (Rajca, 2014). Chapter 7 of the 2017 Foreign Policy Whitepaper specified a stepped up engagement in the Pacific. The Whitepaper outlined three key goals to strengthen Australia's engagement with the Pacific: stronger economic cooperation, stronger security and better relationships between people of Australia and the Pacific region (Australian Government, 2017).

Australia's stepped up engagement in the South Pacific is to counter the effects of increasing Chinese and Asian influence in the Pacific region. In Australia's 2017 Foreign Policy white paper, China, Indonesia and India were seen as major and emerging Asian powers that will have growing weight in international and regional affairs (Australian Government, 2017). According to Batley, China and Indonesia are competing for a greater role in the Pacific region (Batley, 2017). Baker (2018) highlighted that Australia and New Zealand have reason to fear Indonesia's growing strategic interests in the Pacific region. Indonesia will likely exercise more strategic, military and political influence in the region as its economy grows (Chauvel, 2018). Australia's engagement in the Pacific region is a pre-emptive tactic to counter China and Indonesia.

Some of the activities that Australia has engaged in with the South Pacific countries show a response to Indonesian engagement. Several activities will be outline here. First, Australia announced that it would establish an Australia Pacific Security College in 2019 (Australian Government, 2017). The College would target the training of Pacific islanders at leadership levels concerning issues like law enforcement, security issues and intelligence (Radio New Zealand International, 2018a). The College may potentially compete with or undermine the planned MSG Regional Police Academy that Indonesia has significantly

contributed to develop (Radio New Zealand International, 2014). Second, Australia's Pacific Maritime Security Programme was announced in 2017, around the period (2016-2018) Indonesia was increasing its maritime cooperation with Pacific island countries. In 2018, the Indonesian government announced a maritime policy for the Pacific islands (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Indonesia, 2018). Third, Indonesian police first arrived in PNG to train their counterparts in November 2017 in preparation for the APEC meeting that would be hosted by PNG (Radio New Zealand International, 2017d). Australian Federal Police arrived around March 2018 for similar trainings (Australian Federal Police, 2018). Fourth, Australia announced that it would open a Pacific Fusion Center to respond to security threats such as IUU fishing, people smuggling and drug-trafficking (Payne, 2018). Indonesia, on the other hand, was already working in these similar areas through the MSG Police Ministers Meeting (Pacific Islands Report, 2017). Hence, these activities are some instances showing that Australia is reacting to Indonesia's engagement with South Pacific countries.

Assessment

This section assesses Indonesia's activities with the South Pacific countries. For Indonesia's foreign policy, lobbying countries in the South Pacific is an element of continuity. Indonesia's lobbying has aimed to suppress pro-West Papua sentiments amongst South Pacific countries and to gain support in international arenas. By lobbying countries in the South Pacific, Indonesia has currently won over countries like Nauru and Solomon Islands to support its sovereignty, and these countries initially supported West Papua independence back in the year 2000.

The engagement patterns of Indonesia reflect its foreign policy of quelling support for West Papuan independence. In the last decade, Indonesia has increased its presence in the Pacific region because South Pacific countries have been persistently pushing for West Papuan independence at regional and international levels. Indonesia is going to stay in the Pacific region for as long as support for West Papua from the Pacific bloc persists, as Indonesia does not intend to relinquish control of West Papua.

Indonesia has also shown economic interests in the Pacific region over the last decade. It increased trade in the region, particularly with countries like PNG and Fiji, and focused on fisheries and agriculture with the smaller island nations like Nauru and Samoa. Moreover, Indonesia has indicated it will help Pacific island states take advantage of larger markets in Asia. As a founding member of NAM and ASEAN, Indonesia supported the Pacific islands who wanted to integrate into these organisations. To serve national interests, Pacific islands

like Fiji will continue to pursue economic ties with Indonesia to grow their small economies. This economic benefit will likely see Pacific islands continue to support Indonesia's sovereignty over West Papua.

Indonesia pursued its national interests by joining the Pacific Islands Forum. Although Indonesia is cooperative in the PIF, Indonesia's decision to disallow a fact-finding mission to West Papua made the PIF slow its progress on resolving the West Papua human rights issue. Indonesia's aim to maintain a unitary Republic of Indonesia has been achieved by pressuring PIF to respect its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Indonesia has attempted to politically manoeuvre in the Pacific region independent of Australia and New Zealand. Jakarta's support for the PIDF indicated that it was willing to manoeuvre politically and to project itself without being checked by Australia and New Zealand. In time this will potentially see Indonesia play a bigger role in the Pacific region, and challenge Australia and New Zealand as the partner of choice for the Pacific island states.

Indonesia's engagement influenced bilateral relations between South Pacific countries. Indonesia's membership in the MSG has caused tensions in the bilateral relations amongst South Pacific countries. Moreover, Indonesia's lobbying to change national policies on West Papua has pushed countries like Vanuatu closer to China.

The Melanesian Spearhead Group has been crippled by Indonesian politics. The rift in the MSG on membership for the West Papua independence group and on West Papua's decolonisation will remain because of Indonesia's influence. This will make the grouping's core function – decolonisation of all of Melanesia – less relevant in the MSG. This will mean that the MSG will no longer be a unique bloc for decolonisation, as it will assume the role of any other economic and security bloc that exists in the Pacific region. In addition, Indonesia's influence in changing the MSG's membership rules has made the MSG no longer an exclusively Melanesian club. This has effectively weakened the principles of Melanesian brotherhood and Melanesian solidarity on which the MSG was built.

Indonesia showed strategic interests in the Pacific region in the last decade. Jakarta has increasingly offered South Pacific countries funding and training in domestic and transnational policing. Indonesia has shown interests to increase military and naval funding and training, especially in the MSG. In addition, it has planned to establish an Indonesia-South Pacific Forum in 2019. This will increase Indonesia's role as a security provider in the region. In this way, Indonesia could potentially displace Australia as the security partner of choice for the Pacific islands. Australia has increased its Pacific regional activities in response to China's and

Indonesia's engagement and to maintain its image as the partner of choice for the Pacific islands.

Conclusion

Indonesia's engagement with South Pacific countries is an important component of Pacific regional international relations. In the last decade, Indonesia has increased its political influence in South Pacific countries. Indonesia's initial aim in the Pacific region was to limit the effects of pro-West Papuan sentiments. In the last decade, Indonesia's activities in the Pacific region show that the country has economic and strategic interests in the Pacific region as well.

Indonesia's engagement with South Pacific countries has many effects on Pacific regional international relations. First, Indonesia has influenced the politics of the Pacific Islands Forum on West Papua issues, and caused most PIF members to support its sovereignty over West Papua. Second, the MSG core function on decolonisation has been weakened by Indonesian interference. Third, bilateral relations between South Pacific countries have shown tensions, particularly between MSG countries, because of Indonesian influence. Fourth, Vanuatu has turned to China to counter Indonesian influence. Fifth, Australia has increased its engagement with South Pacific countries in response to Indonesia's growing influence, worried that it could damage Australia's image as partner of choice for the Pacific islands. Lastly, Indonesia has intensified its strategic interests in the Pacific region over the last decade. Therefore, Indonesia has been a destabilising player in the Pacific region in the last decade.

Increased Indonesian engagement with South Pacific countries is a concern for the future of the prevailing Pacific regional order. As support persists for West Papua independence amongst South Pacific countries, Indonesia will remain in the Pacific region to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Indonesia's role in economic and strategic spheres will grow in the Pacific region if the country remains in the Pacific region for the long-term. There is a possibility that Indonesia's interest in the region could turn into a long-term strategic interest.

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