Perspectives of Pacific security: An Introduction

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Regional and national security challenges are mounting in the Pacific Islands and demanding new approaches to respond to them. Currently, COVID-19, climate change and geopolitics are adding to pre-existing concerns related to human, environmental and traditional security. This special issue considers how Pacific Islanders are navigating through these pressures and charting new ways to secure their resources, food, health and way of life. The ways in which the Pacific manages these new and future security currents will affect development trajectories and the relationships critical to finding a 'Pacific Way' to safeguard culture, place and agency.

This special issue of the Development Bulletin draws on the Boe Declaration on Regional Security (page viii), and its expanded concept of security to frame our analyses and provide direction for improving long-term resilience. We examine fresh perspectives on security and the ways in which many security issues in the Pacific are interconnected and need to be addressed through collaborations across sectors and society – a 'whole of nation' and 'whole of region' approach. The importance of connectivity, inclusion and culture provides the foundation for most of the papers in this journal. While the Boe Declaration speaks of different types of security, it is acknowledged that they all overlap and interact, requiring a more systemic approach that takes us out of our harbours and onto uncharted waters.

This journal also marks the first year of ANU's Australia Pacific Security College which has supported this publication. The College is committed to creating platforms for collaboration and knowledge exchange to support a Pacific approach to the region's security. We hope this Special Edition with its collection of authors from the Pacific and those with long-term associations makes a significant contribution.

Security governance and collaboration

In her paper, 'Security through a Pacific lens' Meg Keen examines the interplay between security challenges and emerging initiatives to better coordinate across countries and sectors – a key theme of the Boe Declaration. Competing geopolitical and national interests, evident in climate change negotiations, still need to be navigated and new alliances formed to advance Pacific interests. At the regional level, the cohesiveness of the security agenda is growing, but can 'falter if there are perceived threats to sovereignty' that affect information sharing and concerted action on transnational issues. Part of the challenge is the limited reach and resources of many governments to address pressing security issues. More could be done to leverage community groups and involve them in the security agenda.

The Boe Declaration encourages Pacific Island countries to develop national security strategies, which Tim George considers will equip governments to successfully handle national security issues – if they are realistic, the product of widespread consultation, and embedded in the cultural fabric. The need for security initiatives to have cultural integrity is taken up by Steven Ratuva in his examination of the newest security challenge, COVID-19, which is displacing attention to climate change and geopolitics. COVID-19, he writes, has reimagined the security landscape 'starkly revealing the fragility and lack of resilience of the neoliberal system'. The social solidarity economy (SSE), he maintains, is a key to survival with its foundation in recognition of ethical values which prioritise the wellbeing of people and planet over profit.

The geopolitics of Pacific security

Girard, Amin and Watson raise the issue of climate change and the lack of connection between the major perpetrators and those in the PICs living with its negative effects. Climate change, they show, is exacerbating water and food insecurity in the

Pacific. They point out that PICs are often in situations where the actions of their geopolitical allies are in direct conflict with their security needs. James Batley reflects on the gap in the security approaches pursued by Australia and the Pacific region. Traditional partners are stepping up with new commitments and opportunities which can be leveraged by increasingly confident Pacific voices, but they will be selective.

Anna Powles reflects on the New Zealand 'Pacific Reset' and critically examines how identity narratives shape security engagements but also pose risks when the narratives of donors diverge from perceptions in the region. Just as Australia and New Zealand have increased their engagement with the region through their Pacific Step-Up (NZ) and Pacific Reset (Australia) policies, so too has China which is also creating a narrative about its Pacific associations as a regional player. Denghua Zhang outlines the ways in which PICs are relevant to China's security and considers the prospects for China–Pacific security engagement. Although the PICs are distant from China, Zhang states, they are relevant to China's geopolitical interests, and in China's view, share development interests.

Food, environment and livelihood

Securing access to nutritious food has always been a vital concern in Pacific Island countries as all the authors in this section stress. Mike Bourke writes of 'famine foods' – or food varieties that could withstand climatic shocks and maintain community food supply while Suliasi Vunibola discusses traditional and contemporary approaches to enhance food security, particularly in times of famine. Crimp and colleagues point out that subsistence food production provides a significant part of household nutrition and income in rural areas but there is a widespread deterioration in the quality of foods eaten as an increase in cheap, long-lasting store-bought food becomes more popular. With a positive note, Bourke states that there can be improvements in food security with the introduction of new food crops and hardier varieties that can withstand climate change. Changing demographics and demand also requires that food distribution systems be given more attention.

Crimp and colleagues consider the many factors transforming food systems including changing climates, demographics, trade and technology, and how an 'all hazards, multi-sectoral approach' which draws on local innovation will be needed to achieve resilient food systems. The papers indicate that across the Pacific there is considerable concern about the security of both ocean and coastal fish stocks. Joeli Veitiyaki writes:

> Secure access to productive fish stocks is fundamental to sustaining Pacific livelihoods and on-going management of the region's coastal resources is imperative for food security.

For transnational fisheries resources, such as tuna, a regional approach is logical but will require innovations in management practices to ensure responses are evidence-based, coordinated and enduring.

Human, health and gender security

The Boe Declaration considers health as a core human security issue which, as the authors in this section show, requires critical consideration of power dynamics, and the interplay between policy and politics. Henry Ivarature points out, COVID-19 profoundly reconfigured human security relations between state and society in PNG with the enactment of new legislation that required citizens to momentarily forego democratic rights, liberties and freedoms in the interest of national security. While relations between state and society have been brought into focus during the pandemic, so have relationships across government. Nick Thomson discusses the new partnerships that COVID-19 has fostered among health, security and social protection agencies. An on-going concern in many of these papers is how health, gender and empowerment are tightly interwoven. Lilly Be'Soer's personal reflection of the brutal treatment of women in the highlands of PNG makes chilling reading. But her way of addressing it provides hope with her stories of 'home-grown organisations' that provide women with 'choices, empowerment and security'. However, government is still largely missing in action with NGOs remaining the 'de facto' leaders of change.

Be'Soer's conclusions are supported by Philip Gibbs and Lorelle Yakam. They conclude that perpetrators of violence still face few repercussions as a result of policy and service gaps. Women are struggling to find secure places at home, in markets and at the voting booths; even accessing their traditional lands can be fraught – the currents of change that will provide greater security for Pacific women remain weak but will involve stronger NGO-government cooperation. To get forward momentum, Vijay Naidu argues analysis needs to move beyond its preoccupation with analysing the securitisation of the state and development agendas, and apply a human security lens which he believes has the potential to be a transformative concept through its emphasis on 'partner-centred approaches' and greater education and advocacy on issues which impinge on people and communities.

Security issues in Pacific cities

Urbanisation is an increasingly obvious current of change affecting Pacific security as land competition escalates, informal settlements mushroom, and services and jobs fall far short of demand. Luke Kiddle and Paul Jones both consider the human security difficulties of Pacific Islanders living in informal settlements where floods, inadequate sanitation and water supplies, and poor housing undermine security. With the large and growing informal settlements on the fringes of most Pacific Island cities there is an urgent need to address the lack of urban planning and social tensions flowing from insecure land tenure, marginalised populations and elite politics. Jennifer Day highlights how new local networks and governance structures, including community associations, can strengthen urban environments, but considers that a patchwork of community initiatives cannot replace the need for a more coherent vision for Pacific cities and their management.

Communication for security

Throughout this section authors stress the importance of sharing insights to new and emerging security trends, and holding Pacific leaders to account. Jay Caldwell describes the security priorities emerging from regional consultations across the region relating to a push for more capacity to shape national security agendas, to address pervasive non-communicable diseases and weak health systems, to mitigate climate and resources security issues, and combat growing cyber and transnational crime threats.

These papers recognise the politicisation of the media, and the need for press freedom to bring greater account-ability to the security agenda. Steve Sharp, an experienced journalist in the Pacific, writes that:

> there is an urgent need in the Pacific for recognisable, independent and credible media discourses on national security that are disaggregated from the noise of self-appointed influencers on social media.

He calls for better trained and more mature journalists. The Boe Declaration, he writes, is a recognition of shared security threats and by implication the need for coordinated security strategies to meet them. In his opinion 'countering the security threats … will rely on informed and vigilant publics' but 'the unwillingness of politicians and officials to engage in dialogue is undermining the media's account-ability role'. Amanda Watson critically assesses the tele-communication sector through a security lens. Mobile phones, she writes, are increasingly being used as the main channel to access information, yet networks are vulnerable on a number of fronts including the ownership monopolies, the susceptibility to severe weather events, and the growing incidence of cyber-crime. Cyber-security, she states, is an important area of concern and has been highlighted in the Boe Declaration as requiring greater emphasis.

Policing and transnational security

Transnational crime is an important and increasing security threat for most PICs. Danielle Watson and colleagues argue that there is very limited police capacity in PICs to respond to transnational and organised crime which is characterised by complex and multi-layered networks. 'These networks are mobile, well-resourced and strategically co-ordinated, enabling them to operate across porous borders.' She notes that there is limited data to assess the extent of transnational crime but the specific areas of concern include environ-mental crimes related to illegal fishing and resources extraction, sex trafficking, trafficking illegal drugs and precursor chemicals.

Sinclair Dinnen and Grant Walton analyse the growing complexity of crime in the Pacific and consider the changing shape of security governance in PNG and the prominent move to private security. Current crime trends, lack of police capacity, and new pressures on policing like COVID-19 provide an opportunity to rethink the security landscape. They conclude that 'the role of private providers in PNG's networked security will be crucial for reframing more effective … security provision'. Anouk Ride extends this critical reflection and concludes that police and legal reforms that open access to justice for communities, and create greater social accountability would go a long way to making the security landscape more fertile. Jone Kalouniwai and colleagues describe their efforts to take a fresh approach to national security and Fiji's unique approach to integrating values and traditional concepts into con-temporary security dialogues.

This Special Edition on Pacific Security is provoc-ative reading. We hope it stimulates more thought on how we can secure the future of the Pacific and build resilience together.