ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION
Australian Solidarity Towards Southern Pacific Regional Development

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Abstract— The aim of this research is to study the Australian position on regional development. This research intends to assess the Australian solidarity towards Southern Pacific development from theoretical, security, economic, and environmental perspectives because of the pertinence of these factors affecting the region and the frequency of terms appeared on Pacific Islands Forum. It argues that Australian regional dedication inclines to rationalist perspectives and not much constructivism. The level of solidarity is relatively low comparing to New Zealand's. This paper conducted a theoretical analysis and specific policy analysis with a comparative study of New Zealand. To illustrate the case, it applies the numeric analysis in aids and qualitative analysis of policy decisions in climate change, regional security, and labor issues. The analysis relies on the rationalistic perspective of Australian economic and security contribution to the region compared with its other overseas activities and with New Zealand's. The indicators are derived from economic and security focus: the total amount of aids, military engagement, and climate improvement. It is concluded that the Australian regional solidarity is not from a constructivist perspective, but a rationalist one. Australian government orientation of cooperation are national-centric, and the current regional integration program is subject to the diminishing power of the United States and the rising power of China in the region.
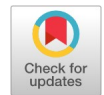
Introduction

The recent retraction from the Paris Agreement has triggered the doubt of the commitment made by Australia towards its near neighborhood. Countries within the South Pacific region are victims of climate change. Australian government committed to cut the emission by 26% by 2030. On the report published by the Australian Institute of Public Affairs, the major reason for Australia to abandon the Paris Agreement is that it is not necessary to abide due to the incompetence of other participants (Chan, 2018; Wild, 2018). However, a commonly agreed international treaty had much more legal force in the environmental issues, and after all, the increased rate of emission was down by 2.3% in the last three years (Storrow, 2018). Comparatively, the Paris agreement is effective to restrain the energy consumption worldly. Australian Prime Minister Morrison states the rejection of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's special report is to protect its coal miners (Hannam & Latimer, 2018). Hence, we suspect the retraction from Paris agreement is correlated to the government position in the coal industry.

Australia engages in many inter-regional relations other than the Southern Pacific area. The U.S. is one of the most reliable allies of Australia. Australia had participated in the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, and the Iraq War. For security relationship, there is Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty (ANZUS), and for economic cooperation, there is the Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement. Australia is also a founding member of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (European Bank, n.d.). Australia also expands its focus further to Southeast Asia. Not only participates in the ASEAN-Australia summit in 2018, but also Australia-Indian Ocean Region cooperation.

This research intends to assess the Australian solidarity towards Southern Pacific development from theoretical, security, economic, and environmental perspectives because of the pertinence of these factors affecting the region and the frequency of terms appeared on Pacific Islands Forum. The analysis will critically compare the regional cooperation with New Zealand's dedication, and its cooperation with outside players: the United States and China. The essay argues Australian solidarity to regional development is relatively low comparing to New Zealand.

Literature Review

Regionalism in the South Pacific region can be explained by constructivism theory (Aspinwall & Schneider, 2000). The histories of Southern Pacific countries share the colonialism identity, and all of them entitled to indigenous culture and population. Through the historical and recent migration and transnational activities, the migrant population has a major influence both in the country of residence and of origin (Cuyugan et al., 2017; Spoonley, 2000). However, in the two regional-influential countries, New Zealand has a different attitude to the Maoris from Australia to its indigenous people. Comparatively, Maoris obtain higher political impor-

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tance and social status compared to Australian indigenous people. In the work by Gray & Hunter (2018), they could not refute the disadvantageous civic situation of indigenous people in Australia but argued that there is no room to include indigenous people within the policy design for politicians because they are on outskirt of national development. It is critical to evaluate Australian motivation towards the South Pacific region from a pure constructivist perspective. Australian regional development strategy is relatively closely oriented from a rationalist perspective (Aspinwall & Schneider, 2000). The 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper stressed the goal for Australian step-up in the engagement of Pacific affair is to build regional resilience for economic growth and security purpose (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia, 2017).

Unlike the statement in New Zealand foreign policy, clearly states that their identity as a Pacific country, and the principle of engagement in Pacific affairs as understanding the community and civil society and mutual benefit of which labor mobility (New Zealand Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018). From a realist perspective, New Zealand has less regional and global influence, and equal respect its neighbor and community is a practical multilateralist feature (Hey, 2003). While Australia as a middle power (Holbraad, 1984), its mandate is beyond the Pacific, and regional integration is not the priority (Smith, 2005). Beside, Indigenous people are not part of the 3 major cultures in Oceania (National Geography, n.d.).

Methodology

A theoretical analysis and specific policy analysis with a comparative study of New Zealand is conducted. To illustrate the case, the numeric analysis in aids and qualitative analysis of policy decisions in climate change, regional security, and labor issues is applied. The analysis relies on the rationalistic perspective of Australian economic and security contribution to the region compared with its other overseas activities and with New Zealand's. The indicators are derived from economic and security focus: the total amount of aids, military engagement, and climate improvement.

Aid Analysis

In Australia's foreign affairs departmental briefing, Dr. Frost addressed the regional issue using Asia pacific (Frost, 2010). According to the briefing, Australia fears the rivalries in East Asia, and gradually integrated ASEAN countries. Its foreign affairs focus has become East Asia and Southeast Asia. The near neighborhood: the Southern Pacific countries did not appear in the briefing. However, these countries are reliant on Australia both in economic and security perspectives.

Foreign aids are one of the major income for Southern Pacific countries excluding New Zealand and Australia. Here is a calculation of the ratio of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in the region provided by Australia.

Fig. 1. *Source: The World Bank (2018)*

In Figure 1a, the blue line is the ratio of the total ODA went to Pacific countries, excluding Papua New Guinea, and the orange line represents the ratio of total amount of ODA to Australian GNI. The horizontal axis is the year of investment: 1 represents 2001, 2 for 2002, and so on. Figure 1b is the annual GNI of Australia. From Figure 1, the Ratio total ODA to GNI is relatively stable. The arithmetic mean is around 0.526%. The ODA to Pacific countries fluctuates from time to time, but it synchronizes with the GNI cycle. The average amount of ODA going to Pacific countries is around 12.8%. According to the World Bank, the 11 Pacific Island countries have a total amount of population around 2.3 million with the area covering 15% of global surface (The World Bank, 2019). According to the quantity of population in Pacific Island countries, the ratio of ODA is substantial. Comparatively, the spending to Papua New Guinea counts almost half of the budget going to the entire Pacific region. However, with the relatively fixed amount of ODA, only the fluctuation of ODA dedicated to the Pacific

Islands follows the GNI cycle, indicating the spending in the region is not Australia's priority.

In 2010, a Policy Brief in Australian Aids stated that the most benefited region is East Asian countries, and the following is Papua New Guinea (Alharbi, 2017; Howe & Mathew, 2010). Papua New Guinea is also the near neighborhood of Australia. This may due to the historical reason that Papua New Guinea was an Australian colony. Papua New Guinea has around 6 million population. If the aid were dedicated to the number of populations, however, Papua New Guinea is not a Southern Pacific country geographically.

Security Analysis

Previous American President Barack Obama announced the strategy of returning to the Asia Pacific and retracted its troops from Afghanistan

and Iraq made a relatively large impact on the regional balancing of power in 2011. China as one of the largest trading partners of Australia shares a growing power in the Asian Pacific. Between Australia and China, there is the bilateral China-Australia Free Trade Agreement. However, the political relationship between the two countries is not as intimate as the Australia-U.S. relationship. According to the Department of Foreign Affairs in Australia, there are only senior-level dialogues, educational exchanges, reciprocal naval ship visits, humanitarian help, and disastrous exercises. It is a major concern for Australia to maintain a balanced power between the importan tgrowing China and the hegemonic United States, and the BOE declaration on Regional Security in Pacific Island Forum in 2018 can be seen as a summon for regional solidarity in response to the decaying Asian Pacific Rebalancing Strategy by the United States.

In the previous Pacific Island Forum, the Annual Report focused on good governance and criminal control. It was until recently, the retraction of the Trans-Pacific Partnership by President Donald Trump left the situation in Asian Pacific unsolved. So far, the secretary of States did not respond directly to the policy following the Asian-Pacific rebalancing strategy. The previous result from the Asian-Pacific rebalancing strategy was not substantially stabilizing the region. The competition between the Belt and Road Initiative and the Trans-Pacific Partnership had divided the region into countries pro-China or pro-United States. Aside from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the rebalancing strategy did not have many promising results (Kuo, 2017). The promise made by the Australian Prime Minister Morrison of taking the engagement to a new level can be regarded as a response to the diminishing political influence of the United States in the Southern Pacific region.

The step-up engagement intends to build up 5 more diplomatic missions in the regions and extending Australia's presence to its forum members. The specific action including 19 new guardian class patrol boats, an aerial surveillance program, and a bilateral police partnership. Australia also signed the Memorandum of Understanding with Tuvalu, and Nauru and a bilateral security treaty with Solomon Island. The treaty with Solomon Island committed a 2 billion AUD Pacific Maritime Security Program. This particular program provides 21 replacement patrol boats across the Southern Pacific Ocean, and accompanying aerial surveillance to bolster the maritime security. The program also includes terms of enhancing the ability of island countries to collect, analyze, and share the information with its neighbors (Department of Defence, Australia, 2017). The program is subject to a parliamentary hearing. The Pacific Transnational Crime Network guaranteed the law enforcement of Australian Federal Police in the Pacific. The network expanded to 25 locally staffed Transnational Crime Units located on 17 Southern Pacific Countries (Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police, n.d.). The Boe Declaration on Regional Security particular commits to the regional cooperation in support of implementation on Sep. 2018. The declaration reaffirms and reassures the participation of its partners in the growing regional security issues on cyber and transnational criminal activities, as well as regional security issues (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, n.d.).

The Maritime Security Program has a fortified implementation because of its subjectivity to the parliament. While the domestic political system in Australia guarantees the importance of the parliament, the domestic policy dedicates much effort into the implementation and administration of the program. The level of patrol boat upgrades to the guardian level means the military countability provided by the Australian government to the island countries. This action indicates the Australian government is increasing its influence in regional stabilizing and enhancing the military countability of its neighboring countries. Similar to the Transnational Crime networking provides a localized station in individual countries, to set an executive branch for enhancing implementation. Usually, for independent countries, cooperation between a police force and military force

cannot exceed the extend to cooperation. Direct construction of an executive branch on another territory and the number of funds dedicated to the program indicate the resolution of a new level of engagement of Australia in the regional affair. The Boe Declaration following the 2017 policy consolidates the execution of these programs, to assure the participation and mutual understanding of the region.

A similar program was launched by New Zealand as well. The Pacific Maritime Safety Program was launched by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand in 2011 with 9.5 million NZD of funding. The program was founded after the series of maritime accidents in 2009. The vessels provided by New Zealand is not a guardian level, and the purpose of the program is to protect commercial ships from accidents (Maritime New Zealand, n.d.). There is also an aviation safety program by New Zealand with 11.5 million NZD of the fund. The safety program aims to support the Pacific Islands Civil Aviation Safety and Security Treaty.

The quantity of funds invested by New Zealand is not comparable to Australia's with accounting on the GNI of New Zealand is only 14.2% of Australia's (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia, n.d.). However, the dedication of New Zealand in the regional daily security procedure is extensive. New Zealand is comparatively more responsive to the programs and needs in the region. After evaluation of the policy, New Zealand's programs are intended to help civilians instead of Australian programs are the response to the balancing of power strategy. Even though a similar maritime program exists in Australia as well, the elevation of the program is highly correlated to the United States' attitude and China's emerging power.

Labor Policy

Pacific Labor Mobility comes with the step-up plan of Australia as a package. Starting from 1 July 2018, middle and low skilled labor forces from Kiribati, Nauru, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu are able to apply for job vacancies in Australia. This plan intends to fill the domestic labor gap between urban and rural workers. A pilot program named the Seasonal Worker Program was effective since 2012 (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, n.d.). Similarly, a program named Pacific Labor Mobility offers by New Zealand. This New Zealand program has an annual Pacific Labor Mobility forum to discuss the further issues and had already advanced to discuss the health care and training issues of workers (New Zealand Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018).

The aim of the Australian labor mobility program is to fill the national shortage of labor force, but the New Zealand labor program dedicates to the development and well-being of the incoming labor force. While the Australian program is domestic centric, New Zealand has already further expanded the policy to enrich the labor capital of the island nations by training their incoming labor forces. Comparatively, New Zealand has a relatively equal position in negotiation with the surrounding small countries. On the other hand, the step-up program promised by Australia indeed expanded the possibilities of labor mobility and provide opportunities for the citizens of neighboring countries a chance of job selection.

Climate Analysis

The Australian government is active in participating in environmental protection programs. From the year of 2016 to 2020, the Australian government is going to invest 300 million AUD in climate change. The list of participated programs is given in Table I.

The New Zealand climate change program comes within the financial aid package. One major regional initiative is to provide access to renewable energy in neighbor countries. The Pacific Energy Conference in 2016 attracted NZD 1 billion from international donors. Added up from the Pa-

cific Energy Summit in 2013, there is more than NZD 2 billion investment in increasing access to clean and reliable energy between 2013 and 2024 (New Zealand Foreign Affairs and Trade, n.d.).

Climate change is a major issue for almost all countries in the Southern Pacific region. Australia faced severe drought in 2011-2015, agricultural and fishery problems and rising sea level (Australian Government Department of Environment and Energy, n.d.). It is undeniable the dedication to solving the side effects of climate change by the Australian government commits to the mutual development of the region. Pacific island countries are limited by their budget in investing the extra amount in improving the climate change issue. The program provided by the Australian government covers various issues and a specifically tailored program for particular countries and problems. The benefits generated by the investment in Pacific island countries on climate issues is reciprocal. The entire region, even the globe can be benefited from the programs. Australia is working beyond the world in solving the climate change programs. However, it is an abnormal action for the country to withdraw from the Paris Agreement.

Table I
Environmental protection programs

Name of the Program	Amount of Investment in Million AUD	Aims	Effective from
Climate and Oceans Support Program in the Pacific	39	With 14 Pacific national meteorological services, a better understanding of climate	2012-2018
Pacific Risk Resilience Program	16.95	Resilience to disasters with 4 disaster-prone Pacific countries	2012-2018
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program	4 / annually	Biodiversity and Ecosystem Management, Waste Management and Pollution Control, Climate Change, Environmental Monitoring and Governance and Corporate. With 26 Pacific Countries	2016
Coping with Climate Change in the Pacific Island Region	2.3	Better global climate finance for Pacific Island countries.	2016-2018
Climate Change Information in the Pacific	1.5	Climate change resilience and adaptation in the Pacific region.	2015-2018
PacSAFE	1	Providing Pacific Island countries with tools to understand the disaster.	2015-2018
Science-based Climate Information Services in the Pacific	0.99	Climate research findings for Pacific Island Countries.	2016-2017

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia (n.d.)

New Zealand's program focuses on practicality. There are still island countries face a severe shortage of electricity such as the Solomon Islands and the Republic of Vanuatu. Even though by New Zealand itself, it is not possible to spend totally NZD 2 billion in the program, but the international activities with European Union and the United Nations assisted New Zealand to have international donors on the issue. Both countries have dedicated heavily on the climate issue to help further and sustainable development in the region.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study aimed at investigating the Australian stance of regional development. Though, maximum data is retrieved to carry out the analysis and draw the inferences, yet more recent studies could be incorporated to gain more fine grained results. Thus, this study could be extended by adding reviews and varied point of views from different mediums.

Conclusion

The entrenchment of regional engagement committed by the Australian government in 2017 brought great progress in its solidarity to the Southern Pacific development. This article has evaluated this issue from the financial assistance, security, labor and climate change perspectives with a comparative study to New Zealand. From the analysis, we can conclude the Australian regional solidarity is not from a constructivist perspective, but a rationalist one. Australian government orientation of cooperation are national-centric, and the current regional integration program is subject to the diminishing power of the United States and the rising power of China in the region. The observation comes from the relatively low amount of aids for Pacific Island countries, the timing, and level of increase in security programs and the step-up engagement. The current engagement is a political strategy and not a similar devotion as New Zealand.

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