Editorial Introduction

This paper explores how novel understandings and enactments of (in)security might emerge through engagement with Pacific contexts. Under the theme of 'Reimagining Security in the Pacific', we explore thought-provoking themes from criminology, history and human geography to examine contemporary developments across the domains of environmental security and state law enforcement services. Consequently, this briefing paper examines how engagement with Pacific contexts might challenge researchers to develop new ways of apprehending (in)security.

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Reimagining (in)Security in Pacific Island States and Territories

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From the jurisdictional complexities created by external funding of security services to the challenges of securing fragmented maritime borders, Pacific Island States' engagements with security are often marked by improvisation and creative adaptation. This is particularly evident as Pacific States and communities mobilise to secure their borders against the introduction of SARS-CoV-2 and to build regional resilience against environmental turbulence occasioned by climate change. However, the Pacific region has long been a prominent arena for development of and experimentation with novel security doctrines and practices (whether in the form of colonisation by different powers, US militarism, or the region's appropriation by France as a nuclear testing space).

Building on the positioning of the Pacific as a region whose geopolitical, cultural and environmental specificities challenge scholars and practitioners to rethink conceived ideas about and approaches to security, QUT's Centre for Justice hosted a roundtable in August 2021 to explore what novel understandings and enactments of (in)security might emerge through engagement with Pacific contexts. Funded by the British Academy, along with the Australian Academy of Humanities and New Zealand's Royal Society Te Aparangi, this event brought researchers together from criminology, human geography and history to examine how engagement with Pacific contexts might challenge stakeholders to develop new ways of apprehending security relevant to Pacific security policies and practices. This briefing paper reports on the participants' engagement with state security services and environmental security, reflecting on the shared concerns that emerge from their work.

Rethinking State Security

For security service providers in Pacific Island States (PIS), common issues associated with functioning in a resource-constrained environment and adapting to increasing stakeholder demands are further compounded by geographic context (Watson, Sousa-Santos et al., 2021). The region presents unique spaces such as micro-states, states emerging from longstanding conflicts and protectorates. Routine security challenges must therefore be dealt with alongside unconventional security issues specific to island territories with varied governance arrangements, strained resources, diverse cultures and traditions, reliance on external support, and large and often fragmented jurisdictions. Therefore, security in these contexts is as much about improvisation as it is about discretion and professional practice.

Our reference to security service providers relates to state-appointed law enforcers across the region, particularly concerning customs, immigration and police, their varied arms, and international and nationally recognised partners. Anyone familiar with the Pacific security architecture knows its complexities and the multiplicity of partners working across the space. At the national level, there are different organisations operating with related or overlapping mandates. Within these organisations, there are sub-sections and specialised units whose varied focal areas regularly overlap. Customary bodies with shared or primary legitimacy in the security space also exist.

The region has a rich history of multiple security service actors operating within respective jurisdictions. The existing research highlights both plural regulatory systems in several PIS and legitimacy complications borne of conflict among traditional and state systems (Dinnen & Peake, 2015; Watson & Dinnen, 2020). Countries also benefit from donor funding, external aid, liaison arrangements and resource sharing. Notably, all organisations operate on limited budgets that are subject to further cuts due to the prioritisation of other insecurity factors such as climate change, natural disasters and, most recently, pandemics. Jurisdictional expanse, specifically for multi-island states, means patrol of maritime borders and outer island territories present significant challenges. Causatively, there is usually a dependence on external stakeholders for support to compensate for shortfalls of both physical and human resources.

Donor aid and 'gifts' from foreign stakeholders commonly hold implications for how security service is conceptualised and how organisations operate. This is especially pronounced where organisations' operational budgets rely on external funding, possibly enabling external priorities to be imposed on PIS. Scholars such as Fry and Kabutaulaka (2008), Larmour (2002) and Roberts et al. (2007) provide critical accounts of foreign aid in PIS that highlight Australia's and Aotearoa New Zealand's status as major donors to both individual PIS governments and regional organisations via their bilateral development and security assistance programmes.

This means that their policy preferences significantly influence the budgetary resources available to certain PIS governments, especially those of small island states, and the dictation of how they may be directed. What may be equally significant is that the government of Aotearoa New Zealand has, in recent years, also played a very active role in Pacific regional organisations and enjoyed some success in influencing their approaches to questions of regional (and especially environmental) security. In short, the Pacific context requires us to rethink state security.

Environmental (In)security

Security studies scholars have long questioned the state's position at the centre of security action (Booth, 1991; Watson, Girard and Amin2021). This is particularly true of research on environmental (in)security, which often critiques 'realist' or 'national security' discourses focusing on the potential for environmental change to trigger either armed conflict between states or political instability within their borders and conceive environmental change principally as a threat to the security of nation-states (Barrett et al., 2015; Williams & McDuie-Ra, 2018). Critical scholars instead assert a human security discourse emphasising the potential for environmental change to compromise citizens' and communities' access to basic goods and services such as food, water, energy and healthcare. They thus shift the focus of security from states to citizens and associate the condition of security with resilience rather than conflict and competition (Elliott, 2015).

Examining the framing and negotiation of the relationship between environmental change and (in)security in Pacific contexts challenges this opposition between national and human security approaches. In recent years, regional powers such as the Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand governments, along with regional organisations such as the Pacific Islands Forum, have issued security statements and policies emphasising human security (New Zealand Ministry of Defence, 2018a, 2018b; Morrison, 2019). However, while initiatives such as Aotearoa New Zealand's Pacific Reset and Australia's Pacific Step-up policy position climate change primarily as a threat to the human security of PIS citizens, this concern is often accompanied by an interest in averting international migration due to future climate change impacts (Peters, 2017). As such, they problematise climate change impacts on a deeper level by viewing its causational factors, such as extreme weather and food insecurity, as potentially causing domestic upheavals that may destabilise states and/or trigger international migration. This emphasis on investing in human security and sustainable development as a means of building the resilience of PIS and preventing international migration due to climate change impacts also appears in the environmental security agendas of Pacific regional organisations. Notably, the Pacific Islands Forum's Boe Declaration on Regional Security (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2019) asserts 'that climate change remains the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific' and affirms 'an expanded concept of

affirms 'an expanded concept of security inclusive of human security, environmental security, and regional cooperation in building resilience to disasters and climate change'.

An understanding of environmental security appears to be taking root among regional powers, including some Pacific regional organisations, in which national security and human security are no longer opposing discourses competing to shape policymaking. Instead, they are intertwined with one another—with the securing of PIS citizens' access to health, shelter, basic services and stable livelihoods becoming central to the maintenance of national and regional state security. However, these 'expanded' conceptions of environmental security entangle human security with national security in deeply unequal ways. They approach investment in human security within PIS instrumentally as

a means of maintaining the security of regional powers in the future. This is significant as it seems likely that this imagined geography of (in)security will increasingly be written into the policy frameworks and routine administrative operations of PIS via instruments such as national security frameworks. With this in mind, it is important to investigate how and whether these understandings of environmental security actually inform practices of environmental management and what changes in the governance and inhabitation of Pacific environments they might be producing. It is also crucial to understand how this version of environmental (in)security might align with or diverge from citizens' and communities' preferences regarding managing the environments they live in and developing more democratic approaches to environmental management and security.

Future Considerations

These expectations of future insecurities in Pacific island countries and territories, and the prescriptions for securing the environments that follow from them, are beginning to shape investment and practical interventions. It is therefore crucial for researchers to investigate how they might be remaking both the Pacific and its environments by pursuing at least three lines of inquiry:

1. By asking how (and to what extent) new security discourses influence which programmes and activities receive funding from donor nations and regional organisations. In showing how shifting understandings of security shape the funding of frontline security activities, from policing to disaster relief and conservation, such research might highlight which actors and issues they favour and which are subjected to disinvestment and neglect.

2. Through empirically examining how the security discourses of donors and regional organisations are received, translated and put to work in PIS, and asking whether this process transforms these discourses towards ends different from those intended by their originators.

3. Through conducting ethnographic research to investigate how and/or whether the discourses and imaginaries of security that we have outlined above actually inform environmental governance and security practices and what actual changes in the management and inhabitation of Pacific environments they might be producing.

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