

**OC 2016 – Abstracts by Australian and NZ participants:**

1---Denghua **ZHANG** (ANU)

**Competing for Influence: A Comparative Analysis of Foreign Assistance to the Pacific from China, Japan and India****Competing for Influence: A Comparative Analysis of Foreign Assistance to the Pacific from China, Japan and India**

The Pacific region, though geographically distant from the global centers of power, have received growing attention from external powers in recent years. Among them, China, Japan and India have expanded their links with the Pacific island countries by providing an increasing level of development assistance. In April 2006, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao paid his first visit to the region and pledged to provide RMB 3 billion (US\$462 million) worth concessional loans to the Pacific island states. Another US\$1 billion concessional loan was committed by the Chinese government in November 2013. In November 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Fiji, the first visit by Chinese President to the region in history. President Xi announced generous aid package for the region including providing 2,000 scholarships and 5,000 training opportunities over the next five years.

Two days before this visit, Indian Prime Minister Modi arrived in Fiji for a one-day visit and he became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit the region in 33 years. Financial largesse were announced by Modi including US\$5 million in grant aid and two lines of credit worth US\$75 million to Fiji's sugar industry. The growth of foreign aid from Japan to the island countries is also impressive. At the 7th Japan-Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting in May 2015, Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe pledged to provide ¥55 billion (US\$579 million) aid package to the region over the next three years, an increase of 37.5% compared to the aid commitment at the 2012 Summit.

Based on archival research and the author's recent fieldwork in the region over 2013-2016, this paper aims to conduct a comparative analysis of foreign aid from China, Japan and India to the Pacific region, including their volumes, features, motivations and impact on the region.

**2---et 3---** Stewart **FIRTH** (ANU) et Kate **Hannan** (U of Wollongong, Australie)

### **What are the Implications of China's One Belt One Road Initiative for Pacific Island Countries?**

The re-furbishing of China's 'going global' programme under the mantle of the One Belt One Road Initiative will result in the continuation and intensification of existing trends in the Pacific Islands. There will be more Chinese investment in resource projects, more Pacific exports of bauxite, nickel and other minerals and metals (perhaps including seabed mining) and more Chinese companies building roads and ports. More Chinese tourists will head for Island destinations such as Fiji, the Cook Islands and Palau. The Pacific Island countries attract a small proportion of Chinese tourists (the overall number of outbound tourists that Chinese authorities expect during the next five years is 'more than 500 million') but their increased presence in Pacific Island countries will offer a welcome economic boost. The new Chinese policy, however, will also bring less welcome changes to the Pacific, above all to the way in which Pacific Island governments will be obliged to gain access to and service concessional and other loans.

#### **Stewart Firth :The Intensification of China's Pacific Islands Presence**

Trade between China and the Pacific Islands is booming, with two way trade almost doubling in value in 2015 to \$7.5 billion. Chinese investment is diversifying into new areas such as bottled water, solar energy, food processing and tourism, and in the future may include seabed mining. The most significant of these for Pacific Island countries is tourism. The Pacific Island countries attract a small proportion of Chinese tourists (the overall number of outbound tourists that Chinese authorities expect during the next five years is 'more than 500 million') but more and more will come, especially as Chinese investors target new resorts.

This paper argues that China's political importance to Pacific Island countries will grow as a result. The PRC is already a key external player in Fiji, PNG and Samoa, and is likely to replace Taiwan as the recognised 'China' in Solomon Islands.

#### **Kate Hannan**

#### **CHINA and the PACIFIC: OPPORTUNITIES for CHINESE COMPANIES**

China's leaders are keen to promote policy that 'uses global resources, and seeks more opportunities in overseas markets'. These 'opportunities' include secure access to

resources, increased direct overseas investment and financing and expanded opportunity for Chinese companies.

The vehicle China's leaders are now using for the implementation of their overseas ambition is their One Belt One Road Initiative. The Initiative was announced by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013. It will over-shadow China's 'going global' policy that has been in place since 2006. The One Belt One Road Initiative is an extremely ambitious project that aims to create trade, infrastructure and investment opportunities for Chinese interests by promoting a network of transport and communication 'corridors' connecting Asia and Africa to Europe. The geography of the Initiative (with its romantic claim of reviving ancient Silk Road trade between China and the West) invites us to question what effect the Belt and Road Initiative will have on China's relations with Pacific Island countries. The answer is, surprisingly, that we can expect it to have a considerable effect. For example, China's Belt and Road Initiative will further increase the volume and diversity of infrastructural projects undertaken by Chinese companies and it will alter the financing arrangements for large projects hosted by Pacific Island nations. This situation, in turn, will present a pressing need for Pacific Island governments to manage the agenda setting embedded in the promotion of Chinese projects.

4--- Paul **D'ARCY** (SSGM) et Fei **SHENG**, Centre of Oceanian Studies, SUN-YAT-SEN University)

#### **China's Pacific Aid: past patterns and future needs**

This article outlines the evolution of China's Pacific Islands' aid policy and potential future directions that might occur in response to changing Pacific Island needs and requirements. Within the Pacific Islands, increasing emphasis is being placed on lessening dependence on aid and the price that goes along with this, and especially developing the blue (i.e. maritime) economy as Big Ocean nations rather than small island nations. This idea is particularly relevant to smaller island nations in Micronesia and eastern Polynesia who are small population, big ocean nations. All are also at the forefront of climate change as the first to go underwater as archipelagos of atolls with few or no high islands. The imminent danger of inundation they face due to failure to reach global CO2 lower emission standards has resulted in a more assertive diplomatic stance towards aid and development. China has competitive advantages in skills vital

to its Pacific allies. The small island nations of the Pacific are also potential stages to explore more effective cooperation with other aid donors in the future at a time when discoveries of vast amounts of seabed minerals raise the possibility of global rivalry to control this new frontier of resources. Ultimately however, future aid will only succeed if it is in true partnership with Pacific nations.

5---Tom **Ryan** (U of Waikato)

**'South of Asia' Versus 'Polynesia': Australia and New Zealand's Historical Relations with the Pacific Islands.**

In the present era, when Australia and New Zealand often are viewed by their Pacific Islands neighbours as two sides of the same neo-colonial coin, there sometimes is an assumption that their relations with the region have always been the same. This paper argues that in fact these two nations' relations with the island societies of the South Pacific historically have been very different, and that this disjuncture continues to be relevant. It will focus on the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, when New Zealand rejected an invitation from the colonies of Australia to create a large settler-dominated federation that would have been called 'Australasia'. New Zealand preferred to see itself as a Southeast Pacific archipelago whose connections should be with island groups to its north. Underpinning this view were the close kinship links between its indigenous Maori and other Polynesian peoples, and the then-current belief that Polynesians were 'Indo-European' in origin and thus very capable of becoming 'civilised' under sympathetic colonial rule. By contrast, Australia saw itself as a vast continent, with islands in the Southwest Pacific offering an extension of its own tropical frontier. Annexation of such territories would allow their natural resources and native peoples to be exploited, much like their continental equivalents, while a strategically-important buffer zone would be created to block expansion into the area by undesired world empires and southward-pushing Asian populations.

6--- Iati **Iati** (U of Otago)

**New Zealand Foreign Policy in the Pacific in light of China's Presence: Lessons from China-Samoa Relations**

How should New Zealand respond to China's presence in the Pacific? Being one of the two regional hegemon that has strong constitutional and treaty ties with a number of countries, a member of a Western alliance which also has prominent interests in the region, and spending approximately 60 percent of its aid there, it goes without saying that New Zealand must closely monitor key developments in the Pacific region, and not just for intelligence gathering purposes. It needs to monitor both the activities of Pacific island countries, as well as their engagement with major world powers. This will provide the platform to issue measured but decisive responses. The rapid growth in China's presence, particularly since the 2000's, is one such development.

Much of the literature on China-Pacific relations tends to fall within one of two categories; either China is a threat, or it is not. The "threat discourse" portrays Chinese intentions as primarily to supersede the United States and its allies as the hegemonic power in the Pacific. Critics of this view ascribe Chinese ascension primarily to a need for resources by a rising world power. The literature also tends to focus on the government-to-government relations between China and Pacific island countries. An oft forgotten or at least neglected dimension of the relationship, within these analyses, is the people-to-people relationship that is facilitated by governmental engagement. New Zealand foreign policy is apt to be shaped by the dominant perspectives, giving little heed to the fast improving and intense relations between Chinese migrants and ordinary Pacific peoples. This paper examines the various dimensions of China's engagement with the Pacific, with a focus on Samoa, in order to provide a road map to guide New Zealand foreign policy in this region. It argues that New Zealand requires a more complex foreign policy approach to the Pacific that goes beyond a government-to-government and geopolitical analysis, to include a focus and response to societal level interactions.

7---Serge **Tcherkezoff** (EHESS/ANU): Chinese in Samoa: recent threats at the village level

The new trend in law about land tenure allows more easily concluded leases of land. Chinese businesses take that opportunity to open village shops with the consequence that "traditional" local shops cannot compete, close down and anger is mounting among local Samoans.

8--- Scott ROBERTSON (ANU)

**Citizenship within a Larger State and Self-Determination in Pacific Non-Self-Governing Territories : the cases of Cook Islands, Guam, New Caledonia**

A large number of territories in the Pacific region remain sovereign parts of former colonial or administering powers, either through their own choice or the unilateral actions of these powers. For many of these populations, possessing citizenship of a larger state is a vital means of securing greater well-being and has generally ensured a higher standard of living to their independent Pacific neighbours. However, historically, sovereignty over these island territories has often generated ambivalent attitudes from the native residents, who may welcome the opportunities for mobility and greater economic development but express fear of the impacts of such developments on local social and cultural norms and adverse economic side-effects. This is especially the case where sovereignty has been accompanied by largescale migration in short bursts from the metropole to the island, such as has been the case at varying times throughout the histories of Pacific islands, which is often viewed as detrimental to particular ways of life. This paper presents a comparative case study of the experiences of Cook Islands, Guam and New Caledonia and explores how the populations of some of these disparate non-self-governing island territories engage with their citizenship, and how and why various forms of resistance have occurred to the point where localised forms of citizenship rights are being demanded.

9---Thiago Cintra OPPERMANN (ANU)

**Coconuts and Community, Copper and Nation: Utopias and Dystopias in Coveted Bougainville.**

The Bougainville Crisis (1988-2000) was one of the most severe conflicts in the Pacific region since WWII. Ideologically, the *Krais* centred on the Panguna copper mine. However, once unleashed, the conflict rapidly articulated through an extremely complex political landscape, and if there were any certainties about it at the beginning, there were few at the end.

The *Krais* put Bougainville in the map for journalists and activists in Australia, but as the foregoing summary suggests, it is not easily summarised. In one narrative, the

Bougainville conflict pit eco-warriors defending their island from multinational rapine. The resourcefulness of Bougainvilleans imagined as defending their communities and traditional lifeways, told not only a story of bravery but came to signal the possibility of an alternative, so much desired by many 'modern' Australians for themselves.

For other journalists and observers, Bougainville signified something much darker: the collapse of the state, the abandonment of rational modernisation for tribal irrationalism, a space of criminality. The *Krais* became the first and final proof of the extreme difficulty, maybe impossibility, of effective development in Melanesia. It shaped what could be termed the discourse of Melopessimism, which came to dominate Australian academic discourses in the 1990s. Perversely, this dystopian picture also included the space for another type of utopia, a utopia of advice, often premised on no less imaginary contrasts of 'strong' and 'weak' states.

In this paper, I examine narratives about the Bougainville conflict in relation to the utopian and dystopian imaginaries that inform them. These narratives shaped the representation of the civil war and have continued to shape the representation of the peace. I argue that the often fantastical optimism and pessimism that coloured discourses on Bougainville represent polarities of attraction to Melanesia, and are related to desires that stem as much from the anxieties of the West as it does from attention to the history of this archipelago. At the same time, Bougainvilleans have their own utopian-dystopian imaginaries, which both parallel and contradict those of outside observers. Examining these narratives is a necessary step to understanding the politics that articulates between them.