

SUMMARY

Australia's Engagement Policy with the Pacific, 2016-2022: China's Increasing Influence and the *Pacific Family*

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In this study, Australian governments' engagement policies with the Pacific Island Countries up until July 2022 are examined. The security agreement signed between Solomon Islands and China in April 2022 shocked many governments that have security interests in the Pacific. Because this occurred during Australia's election campaign, Scott Morrison's Coalition government was vehemently accused of foreign policy failure for allowing China, a potential adversary state, to expand its influence in an island country that is strategically important to Australia. However, one may ask what policies Morrison's, and his predecessor Malcolm Turnbull's, Coalition governments pursued. Furthermore, after winning the national election on 21 May 2022, one may question what policy Anthony Albanese's Labor government is implementing toward the Pacific.

Accordingly, after outlining Australia's post-World War II policy history toward the Pacific, the Turnbull, and Morrison and Albanese's governments' policies are analyzed. Subsequently, I explore how the Turnbull Coalition government started planning and implementing foreign policy to strengthen Australia's relations with the Pacific under the banner of *Pacific Step-up*, with reference to Turnbull's memoir that revealed his intention to counter China's increasing influence and the *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*. Thereafter, I discuss how Morrison's Coalition government that took office in August 2018 developed the *Pacific Step-up*, noting the frequent bilateral summit talks before the 2019 coronavirus disease pandemic and various infrastructure aid projects delivered to the Pacific Islands. However, Morrison's government, having close ties to domestic fossil fuel industries, failed to realize a sense of unity with the Pacific Islanders in relation to climate change. Finally, Albanese's Labor government's policy toward the Pacific is examined. Specifically, because of its commitment to a larger reduction of emission of greenhouse effect gases, the Labor government appears to be successful in achieving more enhanced relations with the Pacific Island Countries and the *Pacific Family*, as evidenced by the outcome of the Pacific Island Forum held in Fiji in July 2022. By achieving closer relations with the Pacific Island Countries and other partners such as the United States and Japan, one may conclude that Australia is accomplishing a favorable security environment in the region.