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The 2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security:

Ten different views from Pacific Security Commentators

Ed. Anna Powles

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With the aim of broadening views on Pacific security issues, we asked a range of experts and commentators to respond to the 2018 Pacific Islands Forum Boe Declaration on Regional Security. Contributors include Transform Aqorau (international fisheries law expert), Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls (Co-founder FemLINKPACIFIC), Makereta Komai (PINA), Dan McGarry (Editor, Vanuatu Daily Post), Wesley Morgan (Griffith University), Tess Newton Cain (University of Queensland), Anna Powles (Massey University), Jose Sousa-Santos (Massey University), Elise Thomas (Australian Strategic Policy Institute), and Joanne Wallis (Australian National University).

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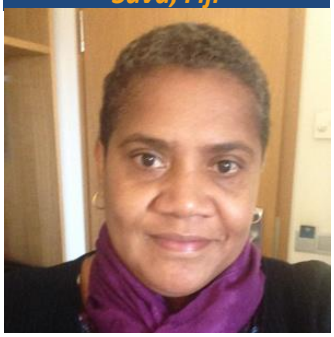


What do you find of most interest in the Boe Declaration?

Komai: It's great to see strong language on climate change built into a regional security declaration – with the 18 member countries, including Australia, New Zealand and France through its administration of New Caledonia and French Polynesia – reaffirming that 'climate change remains the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific. It's a small win for Pacific countries, particularly the low-lying frontline states who are already living with the devastating impacts of climate change – to see the bigger metropolitan members endorsing their concerns of survival and well-being as nations threatened by climate change. However, reaffirming does not translate into a commitment to take concrete action to assist countries whose

survival and well-being is threatened by climate change – but it's a small start. This is something that national and regional bureaucrats that negotiate these kinds of regional agreements can push for stronger commitment and concrete actions.

What do you think the Boe Declaration has right?

Komai: The expanded definition of security to include human security, humanitarian assistance, environmental security and regional co-operation in building resilience to disasters and climate change is indeed a Plus to Biketawa. Whereas Biketawa was confined to intervention in a member country undergoing a national crisis, Boe has enlarged it to also include responses to new and emerging security challenges like cyber security and transnational crimes. These are security challenges that many Forum member countries lack the capacity to monitor and police.

The previous Biketawa Declaration outlines a plan of action to intervene after the Forum Chair initiates a series of high-level consultations with members. However, the new Boe security agreement respects the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of the Forum Member. It respects and asserts members sovereign right to conduct its national affairs free of external interferences and coercion. My own reading of this provision is that the Pacific Islands Forum has learnt from the way it dealt with expulsion of Fiji under the Biketawa Declaration and is giving members the right to exercise their own right to seek assistance, in the event of a national crisis, rather than an intervention.

What do you think could be done to improve the Boe Declaration?

Komai: The Boe Declaration is short on specific concrete action – compared to its predecessor agreement. For example, on climate change – in addition to the declaration that it is the single greatest threat, the agreement could have included a stronger commitment from member countries to limit their human induced warming to 1.5 degree Celsius. On the expanded definition of security, the Declaration is also not clear on specific action that Member countries can undertake to address these new security threats. Given that the Blue Pacific has been endorsed by Leaders to drive collective action in support of Pacific Regionalism, I would have expected more emphasis placed in the Boe Declaration on protecting and securing maritime boundaries and its vast resources. There is a general emphasis on environmental and resource security but short on reference to oceans resources.

Is there anything missing from the Boe Declaration?

Komai: Food security has been exacerbated by climate change and has been identified as a threat to the livelihood and well-being of Pacific peoples. There is also real concern about loss of culture and traditions as this is affecting the security of people in their own society. These emerging security threats need to be factored into the Boe Declaration.

At a time when Pacific civil society is pushing for greater action on human rights including the rights of women, the right to self-determination and rights for people displaced by conflict, political persecution and climate change, there is no mention of the words human rights. As signatories to international human rights conventions, it is crucial for Forum members' countries to include human rights provisions in the regional security agreement.

Wesley Morgan
Adjunct Fellow at the Griffith Asia Institute, Griffith University

What do you find of most interest in the Boe Declaration?

Morgan: Recognition that climate change is the 'single greatest threat' to security in the Pacific is, in some ways, obvious. Indeed the climate change wording in the declaration is derived from previous Forum leaders' communiques. (See: The 'Majuro Declaration for Climate Leadership' – which indicates that climate change is 'the greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific' – was endorsed by Forum leaders in 2013 (44th Pacific Islands Forum Communique). In 2015, Forum leaders 'reiterated their concerns that climate change remains the single greatest threat to the livelihood, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific' (Forty-Sixth Pacific Islands Forum Communique, 2015). However, it is new, and significant, that climate change is recognised, in a security declaration, as the single greatest threat to the region. Pacific island states are currently lobbying for the UN Security Council to appoint a special rapporteur on the security threats posed by climate change.

What do you think the Boe Declaration has right?

Morgan: The declaration correctly identifies climate change as the single greatest threat to security in the Pacific Islands. Threats associated with climate change – already being felt in the region – include stronger cyclones, changing rainfall patterns, coral bleaching, ocean acidification, sea-level rise and coastal inundation. A warmer ocean provides more fuel for cyclones, and recent years have seen the strongest cyclones to ever make landfall in the Pacific, leaving unprecedented damage and claiming dozens of lives. Sea-level rise presents a threat to the territorial integrity of Pacific states. Recent assessments suggest dozens of low-lying Pacific islands will become uninhabitable by the middle of this century as salt-water intrusion undermines access to drinking water. (See: Curt Storlazzi, Stephen Gingerich, Ap van Dongeren, Olivia Cheriton, Peter Swarzenski, Ellen Quataert, Clifford Voss, Donald Field, Hariharasubramanian Annamalai, Greg Piniak and Robert McCall. 'Most atolls will be uninhabitable by the mid-21st century because of sea-level rise exacerbating wave driven flooding', Science Advances. Vol 4. No. 4. 2018.)

What do you think could be done to improve the Boe Declaration?

Morgan: Recognising climate change as the 'single greatest' threat to the Pacific implies that urgent steps must be taken to address that threat. At heart, tackling climate change requires global cooperation to reduce emissions and to move away from a dependence on fossil fuels. Toward that end, the Boe Declaration reaffirms a commitment to 'progress implementation of the Paris Agreement'. Progress is sorely needed. Current pledges under the Agreement put the world on track for 3°C of warming this century; a catastrophic trajectory for island states. The Boe Declaration could

be improved by including explicit commitments by all Forum states to increase ambition to reduce emissions and move toward renewable energy, in line with the Paris Agreement.

Is there anything missing from the Boe Declaration?

Morgan: Pacific leaders have indicated that an 'action plan for implementation' will be developed by November 2018 to accompany the declaration. To meet the greatest threat to the region, it won't be enough if this action plan simply refers to existing policy; like, for example, the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP). It should include specific actions by all Forum states to reduce their emissions, and to move from fossil fuels to renewable energy. The Boe Declaration would also be strengthened if the action plan for implementation establishes a regional committee to investigate and report on the security implications of climate change in the Pacific islands.

Dr Tess Newton Cain Principal, TNC Pacific, Adjunct Associate Professor, School of Political Science & International Studies, University of Queensland

What do you find of most interest in the Boe Declaration?

Newton Cain: I think the most interesting aspect of this declaration is the changes in the text that have come at a relatively late stage of the consultation and drafting process. This appears to indicate that there was some significant lobbying and advocating on the part of Pacific island foreign ministers and leaders to influence the final text that was accepted in Nauru. I think this is important and a reflection of what we know about how much importance Pacific island leaders place on having their views heard at the regional level. This is the sort of diplomatic assertiveness that we need to see more of on the part of Pacific island leaders, in relation to security, as well as in other areas.

What do you think the Boe Declaration has right?

Newton Cain: The text and the order in which various security concerns appear are a better reflection of what Pacific island leaders are focused on for their countries and for our region. The pre-eminence of climate security and the de-prioritising of cyber security means that this text now reads as a much better reflection of the region as a whole rather than something that is focused on particular concerns of one or maybe two members. I also think that the process of meeting with leaders, policy makers and others during in-country consultations as this text was developed is an important methodology for future regional policymaking. There are important lessons to be learned about how it can be used to good effect in the future.

What do you think could be done to improve the Boe Declaration?

Newton Cain: Even though the final text is much more robust in terms of reiterating a commitment to principles of good governance, democratic principles and the rule of law, more could have been done in this regard. Given that these were the basis of the Biketawa Declaration in 2000, it is quite concerning to see that they have been somewhat minimised in this document. Now, more than ever, the leaders of our region need to recommit to essential principles of democracy. A much stronger restatement of some key principles about how the countries of our region are governed was needed at this juncture.

Is there anything you would add to the Boe Declaration?

Newton Cain: Following on from the above, what is missing is something that tells us what happens to the mechanisms available to the Pacific Islands Forum that were included in the previous declaration, including the triggers for activating them. Do these mechanisms still exist or have they been superseded by this new declaration, which makes no provision for addressing an action by a member state that is or appears to be acting undemocratically or undermining of the rule of law. Whilst this Declaration may include an expanded concept of security, that goes beyond traditional concerns and captures issues that are central to the concerns of Pacific island countries, it remains the case that it does not do enough to safeguard democracy in our region.

Dr Transform Aqorau International Fisheries Consultant, Former CEO of Parties to the Nauru Agreement Office, former Deputy Director General and Legal Counsel of the Forum Fisheries Agency

What do you find of most interest in the Boe Declaration?

Aqorau: What I find most interesting is the broader definition of security to also include, environmental, humanitarian, environmental security, but also at the same time I am surprised that they would have to go to the extent of reiterating the rules-based approach to the international order as if that is really going to matter in a practical way because as members of the United Nations they have to apply the rules-based approach.

I was interested in some of the preambular language, which talks about good governance, upholding democratic processes that are really wanting in some of the Forum members. I was surprised and perhaps disappointed that in a world that is becoming more integrated and connected that the Declaration should still be without prejudice to national impulses which is not wrong but it goes to show that our Governments are not willing to really integrate in a way that could perhaps make the region better, than being too singular and narrow visioned.

What do you think the Boe Declaration has right?

Aqorau: I particularly like paragraphs viii and ix, which are really the only two paragraphs that commit the Forum members, but it falls short of actually stating what will be done. In this respect the Boe Declaration commitment is to strengthen collaboration between agencies to : a. account for the expanded concept of security; b. identify and address emerging security challenges; c. improve coordination among existing security mechanisms; d. facilitate open dialogue and strengthened information sharing; e. further develop early warning mechanisms; f. support implementation; g. promote regional security analysis, assessment and advice; and, h. engage and cooperate, where appropriate, with international organizations, partners and other relevant stakeholders. These are all fine save for the risk that the lenses over these issues will be viewed through the eyes of Australia and New Zealand, while the Pacific Island Countries would be interested passengers going along with the journey just for the ride.

What do you think could be done to improve the Boe Declaration?

Aqorau: There is a too much affirming, and reaffirming in the Boe Declaration, and while Climate Change might be the biggest security it is non-communicable diseases that is killing Pacific Islanders, not climate change impacts although there is a long-term correlation between food production and climate change. I would make the Boe Declaration more actionable, and actually lay down some actual frameworks that are practical and workable. It is very hard to know what exactly it is aimed at achieving other than broadening the scope of security. In other words, it does not have a process for when countries can assist each other, how resources can be mobilized and who can contribute to the cost of these security support services. Once again, it will be driven by Australia and New Zealand simply reiterating the notion that this is for their broader security interests, rather than for the Pacific Islands security interests.

Is there anything missing from the Boe Declaration?

Aqorau: It is really hard to say if there is anything missing from a document whose purpose is not very clear. What exactly are the Leaders saying to the peoples of the region when it is not clear what they have to do in order to make things work? Greater clarity of purpose is missing from the Boe Declaration on a meaningful security framework for the Pacific Islands peoples. The specific action items are a. developing our national security strategies; and, b. strengthening national security capacity including through training, which are measurable, otherwise, the rest of the Declaration is pretty much a lot of rhetoric and verbiage. This is not surprising since getting Forum Leaders to deal with collective issues that have real meaning to them has become increasingly difficult where their national interests have become more diverse, and where the tangible benefits are not quite visible. I would argue that we should have a more integrated Pacific Islands Forum region, and have a Regional Parliament where decisions can actually have some meaningful practical consequences.

Dr Joanne Wallis Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University

What do you find of most interest in the Boe Declaration?

Wallis: The expanded concept of security is the most interesting part of the Boe Declaration for me. By highlighting the importance of 'human security, humanitarian assistance, prioritising environmental security, and regional cooperation in building resilience to disasters and climate change', Forum leaders have made an explicit move to place these non-traditional security issues on equal footing with the more traditional ones of military threats and political conflict. These non-traditional security issues have long concerned the island member states of the Forum more than the traditional security threats that tend to occupy Australia and New Zealand. This represents an important realignment of the Forum's interests to reflect those of its island member states and should constitute a reminder to Australia, in particular, that its security preoccupations are not always shared by Pacific Island states.

What do you think the Boe Declaration has right?

Wallis: The Boe Declaration is right to include a strong emphasis on climate change as the 'greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the people of the Pacific'. Pacific Islanders are some of the first people on earth to bear the brunt of climate change and therefore experience it as much more of an existential threat than do Australians and New Zealanders, for whom climate change remains a primarily theoretical threat for many and who will be insulated from the worst effects of climate change by their larger size and economic resources for longer. The specific mention of the shared commitment to 'progress[ing] the implementation of the Paris Agreement' is also an important reminder to Australia of the importance of the international framework for preventing and responding to climate change, in light of the conservative government's very poor policy approach to this issue.

What do you think could be done to improve the Boe Declaration?

Wallis: Due to its nature, the Boe Declaration is short on detail regarding what will be done to pursue the priorities it outlines. While Forum members do 'commit to strengthening the existing regional security architecture' in order to achieve a number of goals, there is little detail regarding how that will be achieved or who will provide the funding and support. While it is difficult to include such details in this type of document, I hope that the Boe Declaration is built upon with detailed plans about how these goals will be achieved and who will fund them. Australia and New Zealand have an obvious role to play here, but will need to be mindful of the need to balance their own security priorities with those of the Forum island member states. Australia, in particular, has a history of pursuing its own security priorities in the region with little consideration about whether they are important to recipient states.

Is there anything missing from the Boe Declaration?

Wallis: There is no reference to gender in the Boe Declaration (and I thank James Batley for this observation) on in the Forum Communique as a whole. Gender equality has been highlighted in previous communiques as a priority for the region and would seem to be a logical addition to the expanded concept of equality outlined in the declaration. While gender has not been specifically mentioned in the last few communiques, the fact that leaders did not reaffirm their commitment to the 2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration at a time when the rights of women are occupying a central place in public debate, was telling. This was also an interesting omission given that the Forum is presently led by a woman, Dame Meg Taylor, and that the New Zealand Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern and Australian Foreign Minister, Marise Payne, are women.

Sharon Bhagwan Rolls Chairperson and Gender Liaison of the Board of Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). Co-chair of Global Fund for Women Board of Directors. Technical Adviser: Shifting the Power Coalition

What do you find of most interest in the Boe Declaration?

Bhagwan Rolls: The decision by Pacific Forum Leaders to review the Biketawa Declaration was welcomed by the GPPAC Pacific network in 2017, as this was one of the key recommendations identified by the GPPAC Pacific network for some time. Additionally successive Pacific Forum statements during previous Open Debates on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security) amplified the need to address the climate change and this was further amplified in the 2015 Global Study on UNSCR1325 as a result of consistent advocacy on the peace, human security, development and humanitarian nexus including through the GPPAC Pacific network. GPPAC is the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict.

What stands out immediately is: the declaration commits to a human security approach but chooses not to mention conflict prevention. The declaration identifies the need to strengthen the regional peace and security architecture. As we all know, addressing the root causes of violence and conflict requires multi-actor cooperation as well as strengthening of civil society led peacebuilding, prevention and participation frameworks. But as the Pacific Islands Forum no longer convenes the annual Forum Regional Security Committee (FRSC) – the question that comes to mind is will this be revived? From 2006 – 2011 the FRSC enabled the engagement with the peacebuilding community through the Track II dialogues as well as the twice annual meetings with the Political Division of the Pacific Islands Forum. Key indicators of the value of these processes were the adoption of the Human Security and Conflict Prevention Frameworks as well as the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2012 – 2015).

Conflict prevention and the development of early warning and early response mechanisms also requires an inclusive approach yet what also stands out is once again the declaration has chosen not to make references to the gender and youth inclusion despite the recommendations of the successive reviews of UNSCR1325 (2010, 2015) which have highlighted any progress must include gender equality and women's leadership as central ingredients and must be strongly grounded in human rights. Additionally the adoption of a specific UN Security Council Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security (UNSCR2250) reaffirms the recommendations that were made through the Forum's own Conflict Prevention research papers series that Pacific young people of all diversities must be involved and engaged in conflict prevention measures.

What do you think the Boe Declaration has right?

Bhagwan Rolls: The expanded notion of peace and security is a welcome development. Civil society networks including GPPAC – Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict as well as advocates of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security) and associated resolutions have been part of the series of discussions and collaborations to progress the conflict prevention and human security agenda. It is also timely that the humanitarian agenda has been

incorporated into the declaration – this was identified in the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2012 – 2015) adopted by Pacific Forum Leaders in 2011

What do you think could be done to improve the Boe Declaration?

Bhagwan Rolls: The declaration should commit to an institutionalized pathway that will ensure:

- Intergovernmental and state actors incorporate people-centred inclusive prevention and protection norms and principles in their policies and decision making processes
- Governments and intergovernmental institutions take steps to act on policies and operationalise norms and frameworks for conflict prevention and the protection of people and collaborate with civil society
- The use of peacebuilding practice including dialogue and mediation to enhance prevention
- Identify the gap between current policies and practices for conflict and atrocity prevention;
- Outline the necessary course of action for the implementation of existing policies at the local, national and regional levels;
- Create an opportunity for information sharing and learning between experts in particular civil society experts working in conflict prevention across sectors.

Is there anything missing from the Boe Declaration?

Bhagwan Rolls: There must be specific focuses on the key role of women and young people in conflict prevention and peacebuilding and contributes to women's participation and space, it ensures that women have access to justice and participate in conflict prevention and dialogue processes. There is a need for better alignment to the Pacific Forum Leaders Gender Equality Declaration and that leaders and their officials must not only advocate for women and young women's equal participation in decision-making in post-conflict and peacebuilding processes, but be visible and strong advocates who emphasize the role of women as key agents of change and contributors to sustainable peace, not only as vulnerable communities and victims of violence.

The strategies to do this must be clearly articulated and this is an opportunity to revisit the roles of the Forum Reference Group on Violence against Women, and Women, Peace and Security. This will pave the way for the distinct strategies that are needed to enhance engagement with men as allies, counter deeply entrenched stereotypes of men as solely perpetrators of violence and raise awareness that only by working both with women and men we can contribute to women's meaningful participation in prevention, their protection from sexual and gender based violence and their access to justice.

Elise Thomas
International Cyber Policy Centre, Australian Strategic Policy Institute

What do you find of most interest in the Boe Declaration?

Thomas: The inclusion of cybersecurity as one of the four major security concerns identified in the Boe Declaration is an important step. Compared to many other nations, levels of internet penetration and digitisation in many Pacific nations remains relatively low. The decision to include cybersecurity as a priority security area indicates that Pacific leaders are looking ahead to a more digitally connected future in their region, and are seeking to anticipate future risks, which will inevitably come alongside the many benefits of increasing connectivity.

What do you think the Boe Declaration has right?

Thomas: A safe and secure Internet is going to play a major role in the ability of Pacific nations to reap the benefits of their digital connections. Like elsewhere, communities, business and government will increasingly rely on digital technologies for national security, trade and commerce and human empowerment. The Boe Declaration's emphasis on cooperation and collaboration will support better cybersecurity for countries individually and the Pacific region as a whole, for example through enabling the sharing of skills and resources. Transnational cooperation will also be important to respond to rising rates of cybercrime, which can often blur jurisdictional boundaries and requires collaboration between multiple intelligence, law enforcement agencies and CERTs.

What do you think could be done to improve the Boe Declaration?

Thomas: It could be useful to have an explicit recognition that the four priority security areas identified are not separated from one another, but in fact are closely interlinked. For example, cybersecurity plays an important role in human security, including by facilitating the free and secure flow of information, enabling freedom of speech and protecting the right to privacy. Cybersecurity and transnational crime issues are obviously closely interwoven in many instances. Environmental security, disaster preparedness and climate change also interact with cybersecurity issues. Issues like disruption of physical internet infrastructure, comprised integrity of data and concerns over privacy and criminal content altogether, in turn impact human security again. For example, if a natural disaster damages vital internet infrastructure, the resulting loss in connectivity can impact disaster response and recovery efforts, or the integrity of data and concerns over privacy and criminal content that cause social anxiety. The interconnected nature of security threats means that policy responses need to be holistic rather than focussing exclusively on one kind of risk.

Is there anything missing from the Boe Declaration?

Thomas: Given how short the declaration is, the fact that cybersecurity was included at all is a highly positive step. If the declaration were to be expanded, it could be useful to differentiate between the many different kinds of cybersecurity risk – for example risks to national security versus risks to the private sector, to risks to individuals or marginalised groups. A commitment to supporting equal access to digital services, particularly for minority and marginalised groups, and to promoting a free and open internet and upholding the rights to privacy and freedom of speech would also be valuable inclusions.

Jose Sousa-Santos
Joint Centre for Disaster Research, Massey University, member of the Pacific Reset Group, expert for US Special Operations Command Pacific

What do you find of most interest in the Boe Declaration?

Sousa-Santos: What I find of most interest in the Boe Declaration is the collective redefining of security in the Pacific Islands. The Boe Declaration speaks to a long-standing need to deepen and broaden how we talk about security in the region and amplifies non-traditional security issues in addition to – and alongside - the more traditional 'hard' security issues. The inclusion of transnational crime as one of the four identified challenges faced by the region - human security, cyber security, and environmental and resource security – is applauded.

Transnational crime is an increasingly prominent feature of the Pacific Islands security landscape and is situated at the nexus of security and vulnerability. In communities and states that do not have the resources to prevent and mitigate the security and societal impacts of illicit activities such as drug trafficking, organised crime syndicates can generate significant insecurity.

What do you think the Boe Declaration has right?

Sousa-Santos: Its very inclusion reflects the fact that transnational crime is identified as a multi-dimensional driver of fragility (OECD, 2015), and a cross-cutting threat to sustainable development, security, and governance. For that very reason, transnational crime threatens the other three security challenges identified in the Boe Declaration and has the ability to undermine responses. The Declaration rightly states the importance of capacity building regional law enforcement organisations and creating greater cooperation to address the changing security landscape and here the devil will be in the detail. It will be critical to not only build on the existing regional security architecture, including the 2002 Nasonini Declaration on regional security and the 1992 Honiara Declaration on law enforcement cooperation as well as the informal linkages and relationships between Pacific law enforcement agencies. Trust between partners will be absolutely critical.

What do you think could be done to improve the Boe Declaration?

Sousa-Santos: In regards to transnational crime, highlighting it as one of four primary threats to the Pacific region serves as a galvanising force to enhance cooperation, information and intelligence sharing, and pursue the ratification of international conventions such as the Palermo Convention. The Declaration's enduring strength and resilience will lie in its implementation; how it will be monitored and measured will be critical. It's success – and keeping in mind the long term view of success given the one single constancy of transnational crime syndicates which is adaptability – will be dependent on the Pacific Island Forum's member states strengthening (and implementing where they do not exist) and upholding the necessary mechanisms at the national level; strengthening national capacities; building greater linkages between Pacific law enforcement and other relevant agencies; and building the necessary supporting systems within the health, education and social service sectors to support communities and individuals.

Is there anything missing from the Boe Declaration?

Sousa-Santos: Rather than suggesting that there is anything missing from the Boe Declaration in regards to transnational crime, I would argue that, as is the case with climate change in the Pacific, there is an elephant in the room. Several, in fact. Specifically, the Australian and New Zealand drug markets are key drivers for transnational criminal activity in the region and the return of deportees to Pacific countries from Australia, New Zealand and the United States has further entrenched transnational criminal activities in the region, particularly crystal methamphetamine usage and trafficking. As Forum member states and donor partners, Australia and New Zealand need to check their domestic policy settings. This also applies to the United States as it seeks to increase its engagement in the region, and having cited transnational crime as a key area for security cooperation.

Dan McGarry
Media Director, Vanuatu Daily Post

What do you find of most interest in the Boe Declaration?

McGarry: The question I keep asking myself as I read and re-read the text is, 'Would this have happened at all if Australia hadn't insisted?' It's extremely hard to see this as springing from the Pacific islands ethos, if such a thing can be said to exist. Nonetheless, the willingness of Pacific leaders' willingness to embrace the opportunity and to appropriate it to more closely suit their needs is symptomatic of the PIF dynamic, and arguably a faint sign that there's hope for the institution yet.

What do you think the Boe Declaration has right?

McGarry: A more holistic vision of security—something that sprang from the Sustainable Development Goals. It was driven in no small part by Timor Leste*, and supported by Pacific island states. The fact that climate and prosperity are given equal billing to the more 'western' issues of cybersecurity and transnational crime is a welcome sign. Whether this translates into tangible benefits for Pacific islands states remains to be seen, of course. It must be said that cybersecurity and transnational crime are not nearly the preoccupation—or threat—in the Pacific as Australian officials would like us to make them. Surveillance and signals interception threats are a rather philosophical concern to us. The question of who will fund the fibre optic cables is not about whether we'll be spied on or not. It is a question of who will do the spying. [* Full disclosure: My former employer was a participant in the SDG formulation process, and lobbied on behalf of Timor Leste.]

What do you think could be done to improve the Boe Declaration?

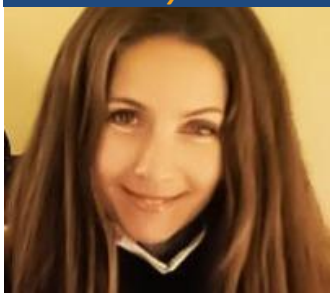
McGarry: Give it another year to stew. It's obvious to everyone that this is being rushed out in the wake of Canberra's sudden realisation that it's lost a march to China in the Pacific. Rather than spend time learning more (as New Zealand is doing with its Pacific Reset) by engaging in a series of open-ended bilateral discussions, Australian officials seem more intent on extracting promises from their Pacific counterparts. Coming hard on the heels of pressure to pull up our AML/CFT socks, to conduct tax reform, and to abjure any Chinese telecoms investment, these promises are sure to feel forced. That's no way to build a respectful and lasting agreement. It may indeed give China the opportunity

to play the sympathetic, non-judgmental friend. These factors, viewed alongside the chaos in the Australian domestic political scene, make it hard to see this declaration as a mature and carefully-considered document.

Is there anything missing from the Boe Declaration?

McGarry: A clear and unambiguous means of requesting tangible and guaranteed assistance. The carrot for such a lever would be the promise of disaster response, assistance to survive climate change and help in building prosperity. This might make the somewhat more abstract concern of one day needing a RAMSI-style intervention more palatable.

Dr Anna Powles
Massey Centre for Defence & Security Studies



What do you find of most interest in the Boe Declaration?

Powles: What I find of most interest about the Boe Declaration is that (1) it represents a cohesive voice on security; (2) it seeks to reclaim the terms in which security is framed in the Pacific (and by whom) by acknowledging both traditional and non-traditional security imperatives; and (3) it is part of a wider Pacific-driven narrative – and architecture - about identity, regionalism, and security, including the Framework for Pacific Regionalism and the 'Blue Pacific' concept, as well as earlier regional security declarations (Honiara, 1992; Aitutaki, 1997; Biketawa, 2000; Nasonini, 2002). In 2017, the Forum Foreign Ministers recommended to the Pacific Islands Forum the need for a declaration, which expanded the concept of security to better reflect the contemporary security environment; better reflect a broader understanding of security; and provide the architecture to pursue more effective regional security cooperation. The Declaration was adopted a critical time when the Pacific has frequently found itself on the margins of a debate driven by the Pacific's partners about the region's geostrategic value. Accordingly, the Declaration acknowledges the "increasingly complex regional security environment" but the focus remains strongly on non-traditional security challenges and Pacific-led solutions.

What do you think the Boe Declaration has right?

Powles: The Boe Declaration gets it right on several counts. It cites climate change as the "single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific" which is consistent with the Pacific's global climate leadership; it magnifies the vulnerabilities faced by Pacific countries and communities in the face of non-traditional security issues by identifying four cross-cutting issues - human security (including humanitarian assistance and disaster relief), environmental and resource security, transnational crime, and cyber security; it draws a clear link between national security and regional security thereby placing responsibility on member states to strengthen regional security from below through the development of national security strategies and strengthening national security capacity; and, importantly, it reaffirms the principles underpinning the Biketawa Declaration (good governance, liberty of the individual under law, democratic processes). Lastly, it speaks to the need for the Pacific to be cognisant of and responsive to regional and global security trends.

What do you think could be done to improve the Boe Declaration?

Powles: The Boe Declaration could have been improved by including broad details about implementation and holding member states to account. This leaves room for speculation amongst Pacific scholars and analysts. To fulfil the spirit of the Declaration, there will need to be a central coordination and oversight mechanism – perhaps a more focussed version of the now-defunct Forum Regional Security Committee. It will be critical that terms of reference are clearly defined to ensure that activities do not over take strategies; that Pacific priorities not hijacked by geopolitical anxieties; that it does not become reactive rather than strategic; and that there are the relevant supporting mechanisms, particularly at the national and sub-national levels, to ensure that initiatives are enduring.

Is there anything missing from the Boe Declaration?

Powles: An expanded concept of security goes hand in hand with recognition of the need for diversity of voices on security issues. What is missing from the Declaration is reference to the importance of drawing on a range of views and perspectives on security from other stakeholders including civil society, academia, and the individual citizen, in order to have a truly expanded concept of security. The expanded concept of security will be better informed – and therefore better implemented – by a gender perspective, for instance. However there is no reference to the Pacific Regional Action Plan: Women, Peace and Security (2012-2015). It will be critical that national security strategies, for example, are informed by gendered perspectives on security sector governance (as laid out in the Regional Action Plan).