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# Chapter 16

## Foreign Policy Making

Edward P. Wolfers and William Dihm

Foreign policy is a notoriously elusive concept. A number of factors combine to blur the distinction between foreign and domestic policies (cf. Rosenau 1997; see also Rosenau 1992). Among the factors of particular contemporary relevance, both in the present case and generally, are: the domestic requirements and effects of globalization; the growing spread and depth of international cooperation and the increasing domestic acceptance and application of international law (which, together, affect almost all areas of public policy in Papua New Guinea, and impose increasingly tight limits on the internal discretion and activities of government across more and more); aid dependency (the more so when general budgetary support gives way to programs and projects requiring joint approval between donor and recipient), and the conditions attached to loans from international financial institutions, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Specifically in Papua New Guinea since the late 1980s, they also include the Bougainville crisis and peace process, especially as these have required involvement in the work of the United Nations Human Rights Commission during the 1990s; the negotiation and management of relations with the South Pacific Regional Peace Keeping Force (SPRPKF) in 1994 (Papua New Guinea 1994), the neutral regional Truce and Peace Monitoring Groups (TMG and PMG) and the Bougainville Transition Team (respectively, 1997–98, 1998–2003, and 2003 (Wolfers and Dihm 1998)), and the United Nations observer mission in Bougainville (UNOMB, 1998–2005); and relations with foreign aid donors providing support for restoration and development, weapons disposal, and other aspects of peace-making and peace-building, including meetings in New Zealand and Australia between the national government and the Bougainville factions.

While other aspects of public policy may sometimes be defined in terms of the policies announced as applying to the functional responsibilities of particular government agencies or discerned in their behaviour, foreign offices (especially, their overseas missions and posts) not only have their own core and other assigned functions but characteristically serve as agents for other government bodies too, charged with pursuing policies which these bodies make, including representations on behalf of the private sector.

To complicate the picture still further, certain institutions and relationships at the critical centre of many countries' foreign relations, including significant elements of defence cooperation, are conducted with little or no provision for foreign offices' participation, while others, such as the World Bank and the IMF, make no provision for such participation at all.

Then there are the growing numbers of international meetings at which particular officeholders (members of parliament, ombudsmen, police commissioners, etc.) or representatives of government agencies in almost every area of government activity, including commodity boards, get together to exchange information or develop cooperative arrangements with counterparts from other countries and officials of the organizations to which they belong. The levels of inclusivity of these meetings and organizations extend from the bilateral through the sub-regional (Melanesian) and varying definitions of the regional (Pacific islands, South Pacific, and Asia Pacific) to the Commonwealth, the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group, the functional or commodity-defined, such as the organizations through which cocoa, coffee, natural rubber and tropical timber-producing and exporting and other countries cooperate, to the United Nations (UN) and specialist organizations.

When it comes to trade and investment, the role of government tends to be limited to negotiating, participating in, and monitoring compliance with international agreements, regulation, and promotion. The substance of trade and investment in a market economy like Papua New Guinea's are primarily matters for the private sector, whether or not they come under the Department of Foreign Affairs or another agency (or agencies) as far as government policy is concerned.

In the case of Papua New Guinea foreign policy, the picture is further complicated by the changing — though, over the longer term, generally contracting — combination(s) of functions for which the Department of Foreign Affairs has been responsible: from foreign affairs, defence and trade, including customs and migration, for much of the 1970s, through foreign affairs and trade, without customs after the early 1980s, to foreign affairs (still including migration, recently described officially as immigration) from about 1985.

Despite the difficulty, already mentioned, of defining the term, foreign policy has tended to be, almost by definition, beyond the competence of all colonial regimes (external/foreign control over foreign relations is one of the defining characteristics of colonial or other dependency status). It has also been generally the last area of government activity, together with defence, handed over at independence — though in Papua New Guinea's case, day-to-day responsibility for the country's foreign relations was transferred on a *de facto* basis to Papua New Guinean control in March 1975, six months before the country became formally independent. It is, therefore, an area in which successor regimes have

tended to have little experience at independence, though generally very powerful legacies to manage. These legacies include the treaties and membership of international organizations to which newly independent states succeed (see Papua New Guinea 1982, Appendices I and II), and, especially, the centrality of relations with the former colonial power (Boyce 1977 contains a detailed comparative history and discussion of the issues involved in the establishment of foreign offices in the context of decolonization, with particular reference to Papua New Guinea in Chapter 4).

The history of Papua New Guinea foreign policy to date can be usefully divided into four broadly defined, sometimes overlapping, periods: the period in which Universalism (in the broader sense, not just the first element discussed below) was the main theme, 1974–1979; a period of transition; followed by the *Foreign Policy White Paper* (Papua New Guinea 1982), which promoted active and selective engagement as the basic approach from 1981 on; and the period since about 1997, when the basic approach has not been as readily applicable in its original form — which may turn out to be another period of transition to what may prove to be a new foreign policy approach following further review.

A great deal of foreign policy, especially in multilateral *fora* such as the United Nations, can be essentially a matter of words. It can often involve little more than expressing a view and, if the matter is raised in an international organization, then voting — especially as far as small states without substantial diplomatic resources and global influence are concerned. The frequency with which potentially controversial issues are deliberately buried in complexly worded, even intentionally ambiguous, consensus resolutions means that votes are not always required, and are sometimes deliberately avoided. Thus, the distinction between policy and implementation, which can be difficult to make in almost any area of public policy, can be even more difficult — and sometimes close to impossible — to apply in relation to foreign policy.

Moreover, even more obviously than in other areas of public policy, implementation is often a matter of negotiation. Insofar as foreign policy objectives are pursued through international organizations or require cooperation based on mutual respect for the sovereign independence of states, there is really no alternative. In any event, quite apart from the niceties of formal diplomacy, a relatively small and not very powerful state like Papua New Guinea can rarely impose its will on other states even if it were disposed to try (which no responsible Papua New Guinean leader has ever even proposed).

Two major paradigms have been developed, in practice and theory, for making, and evaluating, foreign policy: the Realist and the Idealist. The first emphasizes the pursuit of national interests, and the second support for principles as the main considerations. In practical terms, the first often employs the second as its rationale or as an instrument of propaganda (for example, ‘fighting for

peace'), though it can also be used domestically to justify participation in international cooperation and support for important principles as being in the national interest. The second can sometimes disguise the first (take, for example, the claims to democracy advanced by states which present themselves as Marxist 'people's democracies' or as adhering to a particular — perhaps Asian or African — cultural form). In certain cases, the distinction is actively denied, obvious instances being the widely held view that the USA has a particular interest in promoting what many Americans see as universal values, such as democracy and respect for human rights, as part of its national mission around the world, and claims that foreign aid to support development in less developed countries serves such universal principles as equity and humanity, not simply the interests of donor or recipient states.

When it comes to performance, the difficulties already outlined in distinguishing clearly and usefully between policy and implementation, and of agreeing about the sincerity with which principles are espoused, make it almost impossible to achieve widely shared evaluations. In any event, some of the most important achievements of a successful foreign policy are often essentially negative — for example, avoidance of wars or crises, including setbacks to development strategies. The role of policy in avoiding alternative, negative outcomes can be very hard to demonstrate at all conclusively.

However, despite the reservations outlined above concerning the possibility of systematic comparison with public policy-making, policy and implementation in other areas of government activity in Papua New Guinea, the following discussion of Papua New Guinea foreign policy since independence is organized under the same subheadings and follows the same sequence as other contributions to this volume — to facilitate such comparisons as can be fruitfully made, and assist in highlighting both the differences and the similarities they reveal.

## **Policy at independence**

Papua New Guinea is unusual (if not unique) among former dependencies in having had a foreign policy in place at independence — officially, not just in the political manifesto of a political party or the colonial government's successor regime. The main elements of Papua New Guinea's first official foreign policy were sketched out by the responsible minister, Sir Albert Maori Kiki, even before the Australian government transferred day-to-day responsibility for the actual conduct of foreign relations (and defence) some six months before independence (Papua New Guinea 1976). That policy owed a great deal to recent history and current concerns, as policies often do, in which the legacy of Australian rule was a major factor (see, for example, the preoccupation with Australia in Griffin (1974, *passim*), especially the contributions by the editor and Papua New Guinea's first two foreign ministers, Sir Albert Maori Kiki and Sir Ebia Olewale).

Like other United Nations trust territories, New Guinea, in particular — and, to a lesser extent, Papua, because of the impossibility of understanding the one without the other, especially after their ‘administrative’ amalgamation following World War II — were both involved in international relations well before independence (New Guinea had been a League of Nations’ mandate between World Wars I and II, but the system then involved neither visiting missions nor any other form of direct interaction between the Permanent Mandates Commission and people from the territories under its purview, as it did when New Guinea became a United Nations Trust Territory after World War II). Certain governments went to some pains to maintain the distinction between the two territories (a French member of a United Nations Trusteeship Council visiting mission declined to accept an invitation to accompany his colleagues on a short visit to centres in Papua, other than the capital for the combined territory, Port Moresby, apparently, out of concern at the possible implications for United Nations’ involvement in France’s Pacific territories). But the reality was that policy and policy recommendations for the one had direct implications for the other, and, increasingly, applied without any distinction in both.

The triennial United Nations visiting missions provided occasional opportunities for Papua New Guineans to be actors, not merely objects of interest or concern, in at least one international forum (as confirmed in frequently cited memories of the first requests for self-government and early demands for Bougainville’s secession at meetings with such missions during the early 1960s). So, to a lesser extent, did meetings of the Trusteeship Council at United Nations headquarters in New York, where selected Papua New Guineans attended and sometimes spoke, as members of the Australian delegation, in the annual debates on New Guinea (and rather more freely outside, for example at a cocktail party in New York in late 1971, when a prominent Papua New Guinean political leader, beer glass firmly held in his shirt pocket, demanded of a senior Indonesian diplomat when Irian Jaya would be allowed self-determination — notwithstanding the nationalist sensitivities of the official to whom he was speaking, or the United Nations-approved *Act of Free Choice* two years previously).

In a regional context, the South Pacific Conferences which were held under the auspices of the South Pacific Commission following World War II allowed — again, selected — aspirant Papua New Guinean leaders to interact with counterparts from other Pacific island territories. In addition to raising awareness of issues such as the transfer of West New Guinea from Dutch to Indonesian control (following a short United Nations interregnum), and providing opportunities for aspirant politicians to engage in informal exchanges of ideas outside the formal meetings about matters such as political party organization and platforms, these meetings were important in building the mutual

understanding and institutional foundations for subsequent cooperation in the Pacific, both among island countries and region-wide.

Then, during the 1960s, increasing numbers of actual and potential Papua New Guinean leaders visited Australia on political education tours, where they met Australian political leaders and officials at different levels of government. Increasing numbers of senior Australian politicians and officials visited Papua New Guinea too.

Thus it was that, even as Papua New Guinea opened up to the wider world during the 1960s and 1970s, Australia remained, by far, the dominant external factor in Papua New Guinea's foreign relations at independence (and, arguably, not so very external when one considers the relative predominance of Australian aid not only in overall foreign development assistance but in government revenue; Australia's continuing contribution to foreign investment in and overseas trade with Papua New Guinea; the number of Australian public servants still on the job if, in certain respects, on the way out, as well as other Australian residents; and the ongoing, close educational, communications and cultural links, as well as the personal, even political, ties between Papua New Guinea and Australia).

The Australian legacy was, therefore, central to almost every aspect of Papua New Guinea's foreign relations at independence. That legacy was not just a matter of links and shared interests with Australia. It also affected the way in which the new state viewed, and dealt with, other parts of the world, notably the Pacific islands and Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia (as discussed below).

Thus, the process of opening-up further to other parts of the world, or diversifying Papua New Guinea's foreign relations, following independence implied some dilution of relations with Australia (not necessarily in absolute, but certainly in relative, terms, as Papua New Guinea began to deal with new players and relations with them grew). It has meant that, even today, important issues in, and relations with, other countries are often refracted through lenses in which Australian perceptions and sometimes suspicions of Australia have tended to have substantial influence on what Papua New Guineans (especially, those who were adults at independence) perceive, say or do.

The ready initial identification of Papua New Guinea with other Pacific island countries also owed a great deal to orientations and contacts successive Australian governments had encouraged before independence (through the South Pacific Commission and Conference, as well as the Central Medical School in Fiji). Christian missions which had close relations with counterparts, or were part of much bigger regional operations, played a significant part, too, in forging links and identifications across national boundaries, and with the wider region.



Relative inexperience in dealing with Asian governments and people — apart from residents of Chinese or Ambonese descent, and then mainly on the New Guinea side — was another aspect of the Australian legacy (the White Australia policy had applied to immigration to Papua New Guinea under Australian rule, and also to Papua New Guineans seeking entry to Australia (Wolfers 1975)). The combination of pre-independence experience and orientations in relation to the Pacific and Asia meant that members of the Papua New Guinea government and educational elite at independence had had relatively little direct involvement with or knowledge of the country's closest and largest neighbour, Indonesia. The sole exception of any significance was in relation to the (West) Papuans who had participated in South Pacific Conferences until 1962, those who had come to Papua New Guinea for education, including a number of doctors, and others who had entered and remained behind, sometimes without being officially noticed (like the 300 or so people from (West) Papua who lived on a hillside above the Port Moresby suburb of Badili during the mid-1960s, passing themselves off as people from Papua New Guinea's Western District), and other illegal border-crossers and refugees. Insofar as Papua New Guineans developed attitudes towards Indonesia, they were often likely to be influenced by experience and identification with those (West) Papuans they had met, as well as the residue of Australian fears of possible Indonesian expansionism during the Sukarno era.

Thus, the main reference to Asia in Papua New Guinea's first foreign policy was expressed in a metaphor whose practical implications and application were unclear: Papua New Guinea was — or aspired to be — a bridge or link between Asia and the Pacific, without any clear explanation of what, if anything, might be expected to follow in operational terms (the observations that the main role of a bridge is to be walked over and that a link in a chain is liable to be pulled from both sides, or even wound around someone's neck, were made publicly only some years later).

The Australian legacy was reinforced by the continuing presence of Australian personnel in key positions in government agencies engaged in border administration and related activities, the centrality of the common border in policy and interactions with Indonesia, and the apparent reluctance of some Australians to train, let alone trust, Papua New Guineans to deal responsibly with Indonesian issues and officials. A related time-lag that affected Papua New Guinea policy towards Indonesia was a tendency to deal with Indonesia and the border in a national-security framework which owed quite a deal to fears not only of Indonesia but of the likelihood and possible implications of Papua New Guineans identifying with the Melanesians to the west — hence the theme and title of the published proceedings of the first Papua New Guinea-Indonesia dialogue in 1984, *Beyond the Border* (Wolfers 1988), which attempted to take a broader view.



## Policy-making since independence

Researching, analyzing and writing about the making, content and implementation of Papua New Guinea foreign policy since independence is complicated by a number of quite practical factors (apart from the requirements of public service confidentiality, respect for the records of previous governments, and the secrecy which applies to exchanges and a very small number of agreements with other governments).

While the Department of Foreign Affairs has not experienced as many changes of secretary as some other government agencies, it has certainly seen increasingly frequent changes of minister (there were twenty-four changes of foreign minister between 1975 and 2002), as well as repeated organizational restructuring and significant cutbacks in staffing. These changes, together with the recall and (re-)assignment of personnel which accompany the normal cycle of overseas postings, and political appointments at the level of head of diplomatic mission or consular post, have combined to weaken institutional memory. Funding cuts have meant that a very useful journal of record, the *Papua New Guinea Foreign Affairs Review*, has ceased publication. The physical reconstruction and rearrangement of offices in the mid 1990s, which followed a previous minister's desire for a larger ministerial suite, together with the subsequent removal of the department's headquarters from one building to another, have taken a heavy toll of the registry and the filing system (a departmental library which was finally becoming useful after years of painstaking collecting and cataloguing no longer exists).

Like its counterparts in other policy areas, the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs has not been a major player in the making, management or monitoring of Papua New Guinea foreign policy. It has, apparently, met only rarely, and barely (if at all) since committee allowances ceased to be linked to members' attendance.

Thus, many of the records required to write a well-researched history of the Papua New Guinea Department of Foreign Affairs in its various manifestations or of Papua New Guinea foreign policy, or to make systematic comparisons with other government agencies or policies, do not exist or cannot be readily retrieved, or, in the case of possible oral sources of information, are beyond ready access.

More generally, it is fair to say that foreign policy has not featured prominently among the issues in successive Papua New Guinea elections, in the reasons advanced for changes of government, or in parliamentary debate (the *Foreign Policy White Paper* containing the results of the first major review of Papua New Guinea foreign policy since independence was barely discussed when it was formally tabled in the National Parliament in 1981, and not reported in detail or depth in most media).

The only exceptions, where aspects of Papua New Guinea's foreign relations have been prominently on the public agenda, have been the political situation and future in Indonesian Papua (especially when large-scale border-crossings coincided with elections, which they tended to do during the 1970s and early 1980s); the Sandline affair in 1997, which was widely perceived by Papua New Guineans as a test of strength with Australia over the right of Australian media and officials to intervene, rather than, say, a moral issue; the Bougainville conflict, where Australia's role in providing logistical support for the Papua New Guinea Defence Force, and demands for external intervention to stop the conflict or safeguard human rights were significant political issues during the 1990s; and the Bougainville peace process, in which New Zealand and Australia have hosted important meetings, the United Nations has provided observers, and regional governments peace and truce monitors, and these, together with other organizations and states, have supported efforts to make and build peace. Even then, political interest in foreign policy issues other than the Bougainville peace process has tended to be occasion-specific, perhaps even somewhat opportunistic, with remarkably little carry-over into government of views expressed in media interviews or electoral context (one former minister for Foreign Affairs, when asked about the relationship of views expressed about Indonesian Papua during an election to his previous record and future policy implications, responded quite firmly that what he said then was for electoral purposes, not government).

However, insofar as electoral promises and demands depend on the availability, terms and uses of foreign aid, foreign investment and Papua New Guinean participation in development, including decision-making, ownership (in every sense) and employment, aspects of foreign policy have, of course, been implicit in many other issues.

Even so, foreign policy has generally been a significant concern only for educational and official elites, as well as communities on or close to the borders with Indonesia, Solomon Islands and, especially before the *Torres Strait Treaty* was concluded in November 1978, Australia.

One outcome has been relatively greater continuity in policy and, in this case, practice — or, at least, the basic approach — than in government personnel, especially until the late 1990s.

Foreign policy-making has, in practice, been largely a matter of government trying to take advantage of external opportunities or responding to external pressures (and sometimes seeing — and taking advantage of — opportunities in external pressures, and even crises, as shown in the initiatives which led to the *Treaty of Mutual Respect, Friendship and Co-operation* with Indonesia [MRFC — as in the acrostic in the treaty's preamble), and the *Joint Declaration of Principles Guiding Relations (JDP)* with Australia, when difficulties on the

common border and in the aid relationship respectively provided openings to propose arrangements directed towards refocusing and restructuring relations).

As far as Papua New Guinea's first foreign policy is concerned (set out in some detail in Papua New Guinea 1976), it may be a *cliché* but it is nonetheless true that Universalism was clearly a product of history and circumstance. This policy had three main elements (not always expressed with absolute uniformity or even consistency, but nonetheless clear and persistent):

1. Willingness to open relations with any country that did not insist on placing conditions on Papua New Guinea's foreign policy (described, apparently spontaneously, by the then-minister, Sir Albert Maori Kiki, in the memorable phrase 'friend to all, and enemy of none');
2. identification with other Pacific island nations; and
3. a role as bridge or link between Asia, especially Southeast Asia, and the Pacific, notably the South Pacific, especially Pacific island countries.

The first was, in certain respects, an almost inevitable posture for the government of a newly-independent state concerned to display and maintain its independence. It focused on the most obvious and immediate priority of a newly-independent country, especially as far as formal diplomacy and diplomats (whose previous training and experience had focused on protocol) were concerned: the opening of formal diplomatic relations. In doing so, it addressed, and provided a very effective instrument for dealing with, a particular circumstance of the Cold War: the competition for diplomatic recognition and advantage of divided states, such as East and West Germany, North and South Korea, and China and Taiwan. It provided a rationale for resisting embroilment in rivalries where Papua New Guinea had little interest and even less capacity to affect outcomes by treating all-comers on a uniform basis, provided they respected Papua New Guinea's independence both formally as a state and diplomatically as an international actor.

The main shortcoming of (1) was that, over time and especially in the formulation that Papua New Guinea wanted to be 'friend to all, and enemy of none,' it did not provide a clear rationale for the future development of relations, especially as it might involve setting priorities or making choices. Once formal diplomatic relations had been opened with the major players in the Asia-Pacific, including countries in Europe and North America, it exhausted its original purpose and scope. Its relevance and application declined. The part came to be regarded as the whole as Universalism came to be widely described, even applied, in terms of the first theme on its own. The phrase became a slogan for continuous evenhandedness, even a rationale for timidity and inaction, giving rise to doubts and confusion in situations where the further development of relations was clearly to Papua New Guinea's advantage. Discussions about the wider implications of Universalism, including whether further development of relations

in some cases might amount to a form of alignment, sometimes resembled those about the implications of neutralism for the neutrality of other newly-independent countries; the result was sometimes indifference to professed understandings of policy, and frequently similar to that described in a very different context as ‘the tyranny of policy’ (Galbraith 1999, 160–161), when adherence to established policy comes before all else, including the need for review and change.

Universalism provided the basis on which Papua New Guinea successfully opened formal diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China in 1976, becoming the first state in the world that did not have to denounce Taiwanese aspirations — and each of the next few words is important — by declaring publicly it regards China as one country on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. But success here has, in certain respects, been the mother of subsequent problems, as succeeding governments have attempted to deal with Taiwan either ignorant of, or indifferent to, what has been achieved, or at least its significance.

The second element of Papua New Guinea’s first foreign policy, often described as the natural product of ethnic similarities, was, in fact, equally a result of history: the contacts made and experiences gained through the South Pacific Conference and regional educational and church institutions, including the Central Medical School in Fiji, where Papua New Guineans went for medical training during the 1950s, and Christian missions which were organized on a regional basis (sometimes with their regional headquarters in Solomon Islands or another country in the Pacific). It was also, at least partly, the product of fears among Australian officials concerning the likely conduct of Papua New Guineans if they participated more actively in wider Asia-Pacific or specifically Asian settings (would they be corrupted or charmed? or might they identify strongly with their Melanesian neighbours in Indonesian Papua and cause difficulties for, or in Australian relations with, Indonesia?), and the consequent encouragement for Papua New Guineans to focus on and identify their country’s future with other Pacific island countries. The last consideration might help explain — and was certainly reinforced by — the apparent reluctance of senior Australian officials employed by the Papua New Guinea government to involve Papua New Guineans in issues related to the common border with Indonesia (to the extent that some would not even discuss policy openly in the Department; they insisted on meeting for briefings outside). It certainly explains some of the difficulties that arose in managing the border — and dealing with Indonesia — in the mid-1980s, including the lack of relevant experience among Papua New Guinean officials, and the need for the almost-instant localization of key positions which followed.

The third element represented an early attempt to reach out to Papua New Guinea’s Asian neighbours — cautiously, for the reasons just outlined. The main

outcome was a number of statements promoting cooperation between the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation (SPEC, which later became the South Pacific Forum Secretariat, now the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat) and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and not-very-productive meetings between senior officials of the two regional organizations.

The feature shared by each of the three main elements of Universalism was that none of them, singly or together, provided clear guidance — indeed, to some extent they hindered the further development of Papua New Guinea's foreign relations (perhaps, incidentally, buying time for making much wiser decisions). Together, they helped to avoid the temptation of opening missions and posturing on issues where national interests and likely influence were not clear, which had bedevilled other countries in the first few years of independence, and sometimes led to subsequent closures and policy changes (Boyce 1977, 145).

The first element, in particular, provided a basis for resisting external pressures to embroil Papua New Guinea in rivalry between other states by being 'friend to all, and enemy to none'. The second, identification with other Pacific island countries, did not have an obvious basis in the interests of the new nation-state (as distinct from sentiment; culture or physical appearance — which are, obviously, not uniform throughout Papua New Guinea; clear sources of significant national interests, or adequate guides to the development of relations with other countries and international organizations). While identification and solidarity with other South Pacific (island) countries might be a source of support in contexts where states are equal and numbers count, such as the United Nations General Assembly, it did little to strengthen Papua New Guinea's role in the world. Insofar as it led others to see Papua New Guinea as part of a generally less important and less influential region in a remote part of the world, where Australian, New Zealand and other Western interests were dominant, it might even have weakened Papua New Guinea's international standing (the South Pacific has been, in certain respects, a source of weakness in some contexts, if a source of strength in others, as far as Papua New Guinea — the most populous country in the region, with the largest and most diverse economy, and a unique land border with an Asian country — is concerned).

If the metaphor of being a bridge or link between regions had been given operational significance, the third element might, at best, have defined a possible role — though its focus was not on Papua New Guinea's particular national interests (in which cooperation between regions could well be of greater or even exclusive benefit to other, smaller states, and might complicate relations with Indonesia over Indonesian Papua, for example). If it had any implications for questions of principle, such as contributing to regional or world peace, they were never clearly spelt out.

It was against the background outlined, including considerable awareness of the particular drawbacks identified above, that the then minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hon. Ebia Olewale, who was also deputy prime minister, and the first secretary of the Department at independence, Anthony Siaguru, agreed there should be a foreign policy review, and obtained cabinet's endorsement in early 1979.

A combination of independent judgment and responsiveness to Papua New Guinean circumstances was achieved by having an external consultant (E.P. Wolfers), submit his findings and generally work to a committee of departmental heads (from Prime Minister and National Executive Council, Foreign Affairs and Trade, Defence, Finance, and Primary Industry) to review the *White Paper* in draft, before it was presented to the National Executive Council for final approval. Additional inputs into the process had been provided earlier in the process by participants in a conference of heads of Papua New Guinea's diplomatic missions and consular posts around the world, who travelled to Port Moresby for the purpose, as well as a variety of senior officials from other government agencies.

The key recommendation in the *Foreign Policy White Paper* (1982) was that Papua New Guinea should adopt a basic approach to foreign policy making of 'active and selective engagement'. The approach was described as involving:

- identifying issues, opportunities and problems which seem likely to be relevant to Papua New Guinea's national interests;
- selecting those issues and actors (including governments, international organizations, multinational corporations, etc.) which affect us and which we, sometimes only with the support of others, can affect;
- analyzing the relative advantages and disadvantages of alternative courses of action or inaction; and
- engaging actively with the issues and actors selected to secure our national interests.

The *White Paper* made clear that, far from providing guidelines for immediate implementation, it proposed an evolutionary approach by outlining a basis for ongoing policy-making (it was intended to help generate policy from time to time, not to provide a detailed blueprint for implementation). Thus:

the objectives should be kept under continuous review, and adapted as Papua New Guinea's internal and external circumstances change. Such review will be facilitated by the basic approach (Papua New Guinea 1982, 19).

The new approach clearly looked to breaking out from the not-very-consistent-or-successful attempts at evenhandedness, the timidity and the inaction which had, by then, become features of Universalism in practice, by promoting a more outward-looking and purposeful posture towards Papua



New Guinea's foreign relations that allowed for clear distinctions to be drawn in the development of relations with different countries and international organizations (a point which was even clearer in the various strategies proposed). It envisaged the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade being the key point of contact — and the chief engine for managing relations — with the external world. However, this role was only partly fulfilled. Relevant factors in the failure to promote the Department's role in coordinating all aspects of Papua New Guinea's foreign relations included: inter-agency rivalries; failure to set up adequate machinery to facilitate consultation and cooperation across the whole of government and with the private sector and civil society (as proposed in the *White Paper* (1982, 72, 90)); the way in which membership of international financial institutions is reserved to finance ministries and their representatives; the practice whereby high commissions have direct access to national government departments and other agencies; the role that meetings at the level of head of government play in international relations; and similar considerations. Other factors included the priority that successive governments have (quite properly) given to domestic development, the Department's and its senior officers' relative standing in the wider bureaucracy, and such internal issues as the relative (in)experience, seniority and turnover of staff.

In distinguishing between the basic approach towards foreign policy making and the particular policy priorities or catchphrase of the government or minister of the day (and successive governments and ministers for Foreign Affairs each wanted their own), the *White Paper* attempted to avoid some of the difficulties that had arisen with Universalism by focusing on ongoing policy-making, not immediate policy, and so on furthering perceived state interests, essentially on Realist lines, not simple rules-of-thumb. It did so by distinguishing the basic approach from the particular concerns and preferences of the government/minister of the day, and leaving space for the latter to be announced as the basic approach is applied and new priorities are identified as conditions change. It therefore proved to be possible for successive governments to endorse and apply the basic approach of active and selective engagement even as ministries, responsible ministers and their specific preferences and priorities changed, and new catchphrases to describe particular governments' and ministers' priorities were announced and turned from words into actions.

Thus, the basic approach was formally endorsed, and, as time passed, simply accepted and followed, by successive governments and ministers for Foreign Affairs.

However, having been prepared at a time when a key objective was still to open diversify, strengthen and deepen Papua New Guinea's foreign relations — and economic circumstances and prospects seemed to allow for ongoing budgetary growth, hence recruitment and training of staff, and the opening of



new missions and posts — the basic approach pointed the way to expansion, not contraction. In doing so, it paid insufficient attention to the opportunity costs of implementation within Departmental and national budgets, especially in the more stringent economic and budgetary circumstances which developed from 1994 on. The same feature, therefore, became one of the reasons why the basic approach has become less and less relevant (at least, without modification) as cutbacks in funding, staff, and missions and posts, have become more usual orders of the day since the late 1990s.

The basic approach proposed in the *White Paper* led to, and was supported by, a three-pronged diplomatic strategy, which emphasized:

1. consolidation and extension of existing relations;
2. independent and constructive neighbourly relations; and
3. diversification and development of relations.

The particular policies/priorities/emphases/orientations and applications promoted by successive governments and ministers have included 'purposeful direction' (c. 1982), 'independent commitment to international cooperation' (c.1989), 'look North' (c. 1992), 'opportunity and participation' (c. 1994), 'look North and work the Pacific' (c. 1994) and 'reinforcing core relationships' (c. 1995).

In addition to ministerial statements presented to the National Parliament, occasional speeches and negotiated arrangements with various countries and international organizations, these policies were variously elaborated, notably in the United Nations Initiative on Opportunity and Participation undertaken by Hon. Sir John Kaputin in 1993–95, which resulted in the publication of quite a substantial book to promote the proposal (Kaputin 1993), and the subsequent convening of a panel of experts (with financial support from Papua New Guinea) at United Nations headquarters to prepare a report (UN 1995), and, separately, the *Pacific Plan* (Papua New Guinea 1995).

Consistent with one of its main general purposes, the United Nations Initiative on Opportunity and Participation proved to be a useful trial-run for officials (and others) who would later need to know what was involved in mobilizing support at the United Nations for the establishment of a United Nations presence to assist in the Bougainville peace process. This presence took the form of a United Nations observer mission in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, which was invited to help implement the *Lincoln* and *Ceasefire Agreements* after 1998, and the *Bougainville Peace Agreement* from 30 August 2001. The mission was formally known in New York as the 'United Nations Political Office in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea' (UNPOB) because it was funded from the United Nations Department of Political Affairs, not the peace-keeping budget, until the mission was formally reconstituted for diplomatic, not substantive, reasons, as the 'United Nations

Observer Mission in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea' (UNOMB) for a final six months from the end of 2004, while still being funded from the same source (in both cases, the reference to Papua New Guinea was added by Papua New Guinean diplomats out of regard for — shared — nationalist sensitivities).

However, Papua New Guinea's economic orientation and relative lack of complementarity with other Pacific island countries' economies meant that the *Pacific Plan* served to reaffirm longstanding political commitments rather than produce tangible results (the minister responsible, Sir Julius Chan, since went on to become the architect of the *Pacific Plan* which the Pacific Islands Forum adopted in 2005).

General economic — hence fiscal and specifically budgetary — constraints since 1994 have coincided with an attempt to open formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan (in exchange for incredible claims of likely financial assistance) in mid 1999 and resulting tensions in the Department, compounded by allegations of irregularities and impropriety in the Migration Division, in particular, and growing instability of personnel. These developments have, in turn, given rise to questions about the continuing relevance of the basic approach, as well as capacity to implement or apply it effectively. The then minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon. Sir John Kaputin, therefore, announced a foreign policy review in 2000. A further review was announced by the minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration, Rt Hon. Sir Rabbie Namaliu, in November 2005.

## Implementation

Implementation, as already observed, can be hard to distinguish from policy making, either conceptually or in practical terms — generally, and in the particular case of foreign policy where words and votes in international organizations can be, in effect, actions. Both policy making and implementation in foreign relations are also often dependent on negotiation — more so in relation to foreign policy than other areas of public policy, because individual governments have so little authority or power over so many variables, especially in the case of states like Papua New Guinea which have only limited resources and influence for pursuing national interests and government policies internationally, and tend to have to rely on others for support.

However, even significant foreign policy initiatives can require little more than decisiveness and political will, though additional follow-up may be required if they are to produce optimal, ongoing results. Examples include the way in which a young Departmental officer travelled to, and obtained visitor status for Papua New Guinea at, a meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, almost as soon as the proposal was formally floated in 1981 (Papua New Guinea has since become a full member, though, with the end of the Cold War, the wider significance of membership has, in certain respects, declined). They also include the decision

to open formal diplomatic relations with Vietnam in 1989. Though it required substantial preparation and lobbying, the effort to re-inscribe New Caledonia on the United Nations list of non-self-governing territories in the late 1980s is another case in point — with far-reaching consequences for the people of New Caledonia, French policies and relations in the region, and, perhaps, for decolonisation more generally.

As previously observed, a substantial amount of foreign policy implementation takes the form of attending, participating and, as occasion arises, speaking, voting and making and following up on proposals for change at *ad hoc* or regular, scheduled meetings of international organizations and with significant bilateral partners. Instances in which Papua New Guinea governments have played a critical role have occurred at the United Nations — the re-inscription of New Caledonia as a non-self-governing territory and the Initiative on Opportunity and Participation are examples. Sometimes, they require the establishment of new international organizations, such as the Melanesian Spearhead Group in the late 1980s (an instance of an initiative in an area where, like bilateral relations with Indonesia, Australian officials and observers had previously feared what Papua New Guineans — in this case, with other Melanesians — might say or do). In other cases, they have led to new bilateral arrangements, as in the case of Indonesia and Solomon Islands, especially the *Treaty of Mutual Respect* and the *Framework Treaty Guiding Relations* respectively. Frequently, they have taken the form of gradually strengthening relations with or increasing participation in existing organizations — as in the way in which Papua New Guinea graduated from observer to special observer status at ASEAN in 1981, and was then able to persuade the other members to amend the *Treaty of Amity and Co-operation in South-East Asia* during the 1980s so that Papua New Guinea could accede. Papua New Guinea's experience at ASEAN has also influenced the establishment of the Post-Forum Dialogues in the Pacific.

Some initiatives begin as leaps of faith. Others are devised in the contexts of particular events (of which they are intended to take advantage). Examples include the exchange of letters in October 1984 guaranteeing the safety and providing safeguards for unauthorized border-crossers who return to Indonesia, the precise text of which is secret. Another is the *Treaty of Mutual Respect, Friendship and Co-operation* with Indonesia, signed in 1986, which was the first — and is still the only — treaty explicitly named and aimed to promote 'mutual respect' in the world. A further example is the *Joint Declaration of Principles Guiding Relations (JDP)* with Australia, which, though proposed in a somewhat different form and initially resisted by the Australian government, appears to have become the model for a similar arrangement between Australia and Nauru.

The immediate circumstances in which particular initiatives were first proposed, which have often seemed both vivid and urgent at the time, might

fade from view, as in the case of the *Treaty of Mutual Respect* and the *JDP*, whose immediate origins — respectively, in a series of alleged border violations, and differences over future foreign aid arrangements — are rarely mentioned, if they are even remembered.

However, the outcomes may prove to be enduring — as evidenced in the public acknowledgement by other governments and independent experts of the contributions these agreements have made not only to bilateral relations but to the stability of the wider region testify (in regard to the *Treaty of Mutual Respect*, in particular, see the positive assessments by a former Australian Foreign Minister in Evans (1989, 178) and Evans and Grant (1991, 171), and the former chairman of a major investment banking and financial services firm, Merrill Lynch Asia Pacific in Dobbs-Higginson 1993, 244; see also the appraisals by an Australian diplomat and scholar that the *Treaty* has put the relationship between the two countries ‘on a new and cordial footing’ (Henningham 1992, 254), and by another Australian academic that it is ‘a significant step ... to improve the foundations for amicable relations’ between the two countries (Mediansky 1988, 213–4); though there are also sceptics and critics concerning the *Treaty*’s achievement and value, including the author of, and a number of others cited in, ‘Mutual Respect, Friendship and Co-operation?’ (May 1987)).

Some initiatives have, in fact, begun not so much as bold gestures or proposals but as a result of questioning the received knowledge on which previous arrangements were based. The mutual security provisions in the *JDP* with Australia are a case in point: they closely resemble provisions in the *Agreement on Mutual Security between Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America (ANZUS)*, though they are, of course, of lesser status and force in international law. Reported to have been finally hammered out around the cabinet table in Australia, they defy the previous conventional wisdom that Australia would not agree to a stronger form of mutual security assurance for Papua New Guinea than that contained in the 1977 *Joint Statement on a Long Term Defence Arrangement* in which the prime ministers of the two countries committed their governments to consult ‘on matters affecting their common security’, and engage in joint training and technical cooperation. The *JDP* as a whole has since come to serve as a widely cited touchstone for the overall conduct and development of relations between the two countries.

Obviously, some initiatives are apparently implemented only to have their enduring importance questioned later (as in the case of efforts to place existing defence cooperation arrangements in the context of wider security co-operation). Some, such as Papua New Guinea’s efforts to promote more comprehensive and deeper security cooperation among Pacific Islands Forum members during the 1990s, may produce only compromise, as with the 1997 *Aitutaki Declaration on Regional Security Cooperation*, only to be raised again subsequently — and still

produce results, as with the *Bitekawa Declaration* of 1999, which commits the signatory governments to cooperate in meeting member states' security vulnerabilities. Another compromise arising from a Papua New Guinean initiative takes the form of the Joint Commercial Commission with the United States of America (USA) — which is a considerable step down from the high-level and wide-ranging consultations between Pacific island countries and the USA sought in response to a previous initiative by President George H. Bush in 1990.

However, Papua New Guinean initiatives are not the only — or even a necessarily helpful — measure of effective policy implementation. Sometimes working with others (for example, in establishing the Western and Central Pacific Tuna Commission) or simply seeking modifications to existing arrangements (as in the case of the *Lomé Convention's* scheme to support stabilization of mineral export incomes, SYSMIN, during the late 1970s) can be, at least, as important.

Simply working through, and thereby reinforcing the effectiveness of, a body like the South Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency or the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission can achieve significant results too, both for an individual member state and for the organization as a whole.

The *Foreign Policy White Paper* was published at a time when a growing number (and proportion) of increasingly well-educated members were being elected to Papua New Guinea's National Parliament — and more of their number were beginning to enter the ministry — with ever greater experience, interest and self-confidence in dealing with foreign affairs.

At the same time, the Department of Foreign Affairs (and Trade) was localizing, gaining experience, and, above all, recruiting, training and promoting increasingly well-qualified Papua New Guinean staff.

Initiatives taken during the 1980s included the opening up of opportunities for secretarial staff to become diplomats, and the (quite separate) establishment of a multi-disciplinary, professionally-oriented, postgraduate program in international relations at the University of Wollongong, specifically tailored to the Papua New Guinea Department's and similar agencies' and governments' needs, subject in the case of Papua New Guinean students to the availability of scholarships from AusAID (the University of Wollongong's program drew positive comment from Papua New Guinea's first ambassador to the United Nations and the United States, and a previous secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, in Matane 2000, 61–2).

Throughout the 1980s, the proportion of foreign service career officers appointed as heads of Papua New Guinea's diplomatic missions and consular posts abroad continued to rise.

The prospects for successfully implementing the more outward- and forward-looking and purposeful approach proposed in the *White Paper* improved

accordingly, until budget cuts beginning in the 1990s required the retrenchment of personnel, the repeated restructuring of the Department of Foreign Affairs, and, in 2001–02, the closure of a number of diplomatic missions and consular posts.

One measure of the Department's success in attracting, recruiting and building the capacity of its personnel is the way in which they have, in effect, 'colonized' other areas of the bureaucracy — where, at times, six or more of their number have been heads of other important government agencies. The head of the Department of Foreign Affairs has generally come from the Department's own ranks; the only exceptions have been personnel with previous high-level experience in another government agency — and then following service as a head of a diplomatic mission abroad.

However, following the budget cuts, retrenchments of personnel, closure of missions and posts which have come about (at least, partly) as a result of the 2001 functions review — itself part of the much wider, ongoing public sector reform program — and pending the outcome of ongoing public sector reform and the foreign policy review, it is appropriate to be sombre, though hopeful about the short- to medium-term future of Papua New Guinea's Department of Foreign Affairs.

## Conclusion

Like every other area of public policy, Papua New Guinea foreign policy probably deserves a mixed review after twenty-five-plus years — though one in which the balance is all the more positive because of the comparative lateness with which foreign policy-making became a Papua New Guinean responsibility, the relative speed and completeness with which the staff of the Department of Foreign Affairs was localized, and the manner in which early achievements have generally been sustained (while some diplomatic missions and consular posts have been closed, Papua New Guinea has not deliberately breached any treaties or gone back on other international agreements, although the Supreme Court of Papua New Guinea found in 2005 that one, the treaty providing for the Enhanced Co-operation Program (ECP) with Australia, was inconsistent with the *Papua New Guinea Constitution* and had, therefore, to be considerably revised).

It is also important to note that, while the Department's functions have, in certain respects, been cut, the scope of its activities has grown, notably (though not only) in the way that the presence of neutral, regional monitors and the United Nations observer mission in support of the Bougainville peace process has given foreign actors, relations and so policy a fresh domestic dimension.

Implementation of the agreed arrangements for managing foreign relations in consultation and cooperation with the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) under the terms of the *Bougainville Peace Agreement* and the constitutional



provisions giving them legal effect will, in future, require the Department of Foreign Affairs to set up and remain mindful of the procedures required to allow the ABG to participate in specified aspects of Papua New Guinea's international relations in accordance with the *Agreement*.

As in other areas of public policy, major initiatives have often come from within — or, at least, from the minister and the Department, including diplomatic missions and consular posts abroad. The distinction promoted in the *Foreign Policy White Paper* between the basic approach (for the generation) of foreign policy and the particular emphases, preferences and catchphrases of successive governments and individual ministers has facilitated continuity and incremental development in key areas. The growing professionalization of the Department of Foreign Affairs, including the gradual increase in the appointment by cabinet of heads of mission and post from within, has supported the process in practice.

Though it is hard to document the case in detail — and there have been occasional departures — the pattern of steady growth (at least, until the cuts necessitated by the overall budgetary situation since 1997) has been supported by the way in which the making and management of what might be loosely described as the political aspects of foreign policy has generally occurred in a context where other materially important factors have also been taken into account, especially foreign aid, trade and investment. In a very particular sense, the latter have provided the ballast which has helped to restrain any tendency to the kinds of extravagances that have occurred (and then required even greater subsequent cutbacks) in other newly-independent, developing countries.

The experience of the Department of Foreign Affairs also underlines the importance of serious commitment to capacity building after recruitment — generally positively, but, in certain respects, negatively, when circumstances have imposed unusually serious limits on the availability of funds and personnel.

The sensitivity of the Department's responsibilities required an unusually early, firm and determined commitment by management to complete localization. The same sensitivity — which includes the role the Department plays in relation to foreign aid — makes it a difficult model to explain and promote more widely within the Papua New Guinea system of government. It is, therefore, perhaps of limited utility in seeking support for building capacity in other areas of public policy.

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