

# **“Is Hegemony in the South Pacific possible?”**

**By**

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## **Abstract**

Hegemony is a concept associated with 'superordinate' powers equated to a sovereign state that has amassed great wealth and prowess. It is instrumental in developing institutions and defines the 'rules of the game'. This paper explores the theory, that to be a hegemon in the region, a super-powerful state requires more than controlling inherent material capabilities. The rule of force and ideological thinking are now inadequate to keep a super state as the dominant or hegemonic power. There are distinct shifts of power dynamics from a realist perspective which includes John Mearsheimer's "hard" and "latent power" to Evelyn Goh's ideational thinking and the "cultural and social" components. China-US feature strongly in this paper. It will explore if hegemony is possible in the South Pacific Region (SPR). The region covers a large blue ocean space that has a number of small Pacific Island sovereign states and New Zealand and Australia. Geographically, the region has three distinct sub-regions namely, Melanesia, Polynesia, Micronesia. It is within these sub-region that 'ordering' of states occur with New Zealand, Australia and Papua New Guinea occupying larger landmasses and having bigger populations than the smaller island states. The emergence of China with its foreign policy interests, 'soft power' and blue ocean naval strategy into the SPR has attracted attention from the traditional powers inside and outside the region. In response, US, a superpower identified as the hegemon in the Pacific region, post colonization era during the 20<sup>th</sup> and the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, earning its name as 'Pacific Theatre or The American Lake', is re-adjusting its strategy to counter China's interest. An analysis based on the ranking table with specific parameters will assist in determining which of the powers, in this instance, US and China will occupy the top of the rank. Even so it may not be adequate to claim hegemonic status in the region. This paper agrees that 'hegemony' is specific to the

region of its interest. Power is measured in terms of its relative gains. The primary criteria in the ranking table will measure Aid given by donor countries to Pacific Islands. Although New Zealand and Australia are within the region they are ranked as donor states rather than recipients like island states in the sub-region.

**Key words:** South Pacific, Islands, New Zealand, Australia, United States, China, hegemony, power, hierarchy, strategy, diplomacy

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## 1.0 Introduction

“I am always amused when people come to the islands and talk about politics as if this was something new or something we had to learn. Politics themselves are as old as man and well known in the islands”, (RatuMara, 1969)

Hegemony or “hegemonia.... and ‘*ἡγεμονία*, [or] *hegemon*”, are Greek words signifying, “supreme command or supremacy”, (Wilkinson, 2008, p. 120). The term was used in “Homer’s Iliad .hegemonia.[II.2]”, which indicated, “the hegemony or sovereignty of one state over number of subordinates, as of Athens in Attica [or]...the hegemony of Greece”, (Wilkinson, 2008, pp. 120-122), as was the case with Sparta and Athens during the “Peloponnesian war (404 BC)”, (Wilkinson, 2008, p. 120). The term literally means the “dominant and oppressive status of one element in the system over the others”, (Wilkinson, 2008). Wilkinson indicated, “the Peloponn[esian] war was a struggle for this hegemony”, (Wilkinson, 2008, pp. 120-122).

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the theory of hegemony, was again referred to by Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), an Italian Marxist theorist, (Foragacs, David, n.d.). Based on Gramsci’s writings in his notebooks ‘hegemony’ centres on “cultural and ideological means”, (Foragacs, David, n.d.). In his view, the dominant power or the ruling class preserve their dominance over subordinate classes, (Foragacs, David, n.d.). Hegemony is a form of grand strategy.

The Greek version as noted by Wilkinson views hegemony as “supremacy or sovereignty of one state “over number of subordinates”. Gramsci, on the other hand

reaffirms the notion that hegemony theory is premised on the fact that ideas form an integral dimension of how man is governed, and it is not just by the use of force.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, to be a regional power, a state needs to fulfil specific criteria in order to become a hegemon. State powers in a region are varied, be it superpower, middle power or minor power. Each operates independently with its own sovereignty and possess powers and privilege. A collection of states divided by land borders, such as European Union (EU) which is a new paradigm as a supranational entity that tests the structure and sovereignty of its member states. The South Pacific Region (SPR) is structured differently and comprises island states, New Zealand (NZ) and Australia which are separated by ocean borders.

Formation of alliances occurs at the state level as 'units' and the dominant or hegemonic state often dictates these alliances. These states possess powers and privileges. There is an endless rivalry between great powers. However, the unipolar arrangement has become more than bi-polar as states are shifting to a multi-polar arrangement. This means structural changes from traditional state and ongoing transformation for states to adapt to new ideas and pressures within the region or even globalization.

This paper will argue that the core concept of power, structure and hegemony are interlinked and to be a dominant power in the region, a state is required to also focus on the 'social and cultural' component as it filtrates the three distinct levels and interacts with states to effect "international outcomes", (Waltz, 1988) . It will attempt to unpack the three concepts of power, structure and hegemony by analysing the IR

realism approach. It will also touch on structural realism. Using the above argument, this paper will explore and identify who is the dominant state or hegemony in the SPR. To be a hegemon in a region, a 'superordinate' state requires more than controlling inherent material capabilities. The use of force and ideological thinking are inadequate to keep a super state as the dominant power. There is a distinct shift of power dynamics from a realist perspective involving "hard and "latent power", (Bates, 1975) and ideological perspective to one that includes "cultural and social", (Goh, 2008) The paper reinforces Goh's thinking that hegemony has a social component that is crucial rather than just the material capability that Mearsheimer suggests. Importantly, it will discuss and examine the approaches by China and United States to assess the level of their interests and their role in the SPR.

Notably, the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has witnessed changes to state power competition within the region and internationally. This indicates a shift and weakened collective regulatory powers that once controlled orders in specific regions. The period covered in this paper will be post 1945 through to pre and post-Cold War eras when the US was the acknowledged superpower in the region.

Since the 1990s, the People's Republic of China (PRC) claiming to be a developing nation has been deepening its foreign engagement in the SPR. As widely publicized, PRC aims to further its foreign policy interests and blue ocean maritime naval strategy in the region. During this period, PRC has gained a strong foothold in the SPR and has signed agreements with fourteen Pacific Island sovereign states in the sub-region as it promotes its 'soft power or cheque book diplomacy'. It has been argued that PRC's interest in SPR has been more to counter Taiwan's influence in the region.

Though, this is a moot point. In response to PRC increasing influence, the US, in 2007, under President Obama administration launched its 'Pivot to Asia-Pacific'. Notably, Professor Robert Ayson asserted that Australia is "one of Washington's leading allies in Asia-Pacific" (Ayson, 2012, p. 338). New Zealand, on the other hand, as Ayson indicated, "is unable and unwilling to match the intensity of its neighbour's relationship with leading power", (Ayson, 2012, p. 338).

This paper will have five parts. The first will give a brief outline of how I will approach the question of hegemony in SPR. The second part will define the concept of 'hegemon'. It will cite both the U.S. and China throughout as examples of superpowers and the possibility of one being a regional hegemon. In addition it will also evaluate the distinction between hegemony and the concept of 'power' drawing on relevant sources from research in IR literature on the topic of hegemon and power which forms the basis of this paper. In addition it will provide brief geographical and relevant historical information on the region. The third part will discuss the different ways of acting as 'hegemon'. The paper will analyse and critically examine who may have been or could be a hegemon in the SPR. Within this it will deliberate on the colonial powers and the U.S. from the 1940s to today. New Zealand (NZ), Australia and China's role in the region will also be featured.

It will also scrutinise the relevance of the topic of hegemony and its significance to the geographical location of the SPR. The fourth part will evaluate whether 'hegemony' is possible in the SPR. To this end, I will try to evaluate and assess the extent of this possibility of the powerful states that have influence in the region and find a clear distinction between the power concentration or distribution and the emphasis between



the capabilities or means as opposed to the outcomes or effects. This aspect will be fully explored using the ranking tables has been compiled in detail to evaluate the situation of the great powers operating in the region.

The concluding part will assert that whilst hegemon is possible in the SPR, neither the US nor China are ranked as the hegemon in the region. There are four distinct powers in the SPR namely, China, the US, Australia and NZ. The four states contribute significantly in various ways towards development in the region, be it through aid, security or economics. Using aid as the primary measure, Australia is the largest donor in aid, China as second, NZ as third and US fourth. This is based on the table ranking. However, Australia, unlike China has yet to sign diplomatic ties with fourteen of the Pacific Island states and neither has US. Though it is observed PRC, as argued by some has pursued its interest in the SPR to compete more with Taiwan than the US. This is a moot point. Nevertheless, the US still ranks as the top in material wealth and defense capabilities. Whilst Australia ranked as the top donor and China as second gives an indication that these are the two major powers in the region based on Aid. Other factors that contribute to being a superpower in the region involves deeper interactions and involvement in several layers be it structural or economically. Material capability does contribute however, this focus appears to have now shifted.

### **1.1 Literatures on the Topic of Hegemon in SPR**

There are a few scholarly articles written on hegemony in the SPR by experts such as; Steven Ratuva, Jian Yang and others. Both Ratuva and Yang are cited in this paper. Ratuva in his journal article written for Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies, had used the concept of hegemony in his text to denote that both the US and PRC were

both hegemony in the SPR. A quick count on the use of the term hegemon in Ratuva's article only showed, he used the word 'hegemony', approximately four times. In contrast, Yang in his Pacific Review article, titled "China in the South Pacific: hegemon on the horizon", the title itself speaks to readers or those researching the concept hegemon. In Yang's perspective, there is an element of competition between the powers in the region, particularly between US and PRC. Both articles cover the possibility of competition between the two powers with the SPR as a target for a 'new Cold War theatre.

## 2.0 What is Hegemony?

The concept 'hegemony' gives the notion of an all dominant nation state that possess great power and is even more dominant than an ordinary super-power and occupies the very top position in the hierarchy of states. As a case in point, hegemon, as claimed in a statement by Steven W. Mosher, during his presentation to the US House of Representatives showed that the US only became aware of this concept "during Henry Kissinger's secret visit to Beijing in 1971", (Mosher, n.d, p. 1). According to Mosher, "it was the Chinese translator's use of this unfamiliar English word [that] sent the American scrambling for their dictionaries", (Mosher, n.d, p. 1). Mosher claims, it was at this point that the US discovered the meaning of "hegemony" which he indicated to mean "a single pole or axis of power" which meant "leadership or predominant influence by one state over others", (Mosher, n.d).

The term hegemony has embedded in it, political and economic might with strong military and defence capabilities. Gilpin alerts us to "Thucydides conception of

international relations” and the “structure of the system or distribution of power among the states can be stable or unstable”, (Gilpin, 1988, p. 592). The “stable system [is one that] has unequivocal hierarchy of power and an unchallenged dominant or hegemonic power”, (Gilpin, 1988, p. 592). Alternatively, for an “unstable system” Gilpin indicates, it relates to “economic, technological, and other changes” that erode “the international hierarchy” thus challenging “the position of the hegemonic state”, (Gilpin, 1988, p. 592).

The “structure of the international system”, comprises the “hierarchy of power and relations amongst states in the system”, (Gilpin, 1988, p. 592). The hypothesis of hegemony involves intricate details of layered interactions at various levels within this system of structures from the super power, middle power down to the minor power and vice versa within a region as well as external to the region. Interestingly, Gilpin remarks, in the chaos of the international structure and at the state level “statesmen make decisions and respond to the decisions of others action-reaction process” which he argues impact on state’s foreign policies thus affecting diplomatic relationship, (Gilpin, 1988, p. 592).

The outcome of these diplomatic interaction, Gilpin (1988, p.593), says, can trigger “situations in which statesmen deliberately provoke a [hegemonic] war [as Thucydides called it] or lose control over events”. Such are the dynamics of international relations propelled by the variance in growth of powers amongst states. Fundamental to these evolutionary changes within state actors, as noted by Gilpin, are human factors. These he labels as “interest, pride, fear” to which “they always seek to increase their wealth and power until other humans, driven by like passions, try to stop them”, (Gilpin, 1988,

p. 593). Using “great powers” such as the United States (US) and China, as “constituting a system” similar to Thucydides’ thought of “Sparta and Athens”, (Gilpin, 1988, p. 595) it appears the scene is set.

In furthering Thucydides’ thinking, Gilpin asserts, the “distribution of power among states” is what forms the “structure of the system” and it is the “hierarchy of power among these states” that helps “define and maintain the system and determine the relative prestige of states, their spheres of influence, and their political relations”, (Gilpin, 1988, pp. 595-6). It is therefore the “hierarchy of power” interlinked with relevant components are what “gave order and stability to the system”, (Gilpin, 1988, p. 596).

Interestingly, Wilkinson, citing Homer, had indicated that ‘hegemonia’ literally means the dominant and oppressive position of a state in the system above all others. Hegemony concept is useful in advancing one’s knowledge to appreciate the power interactions within international relations. It is important to note a crucial point from Antonio Gramsci who affirmed, consent is a central aspect of understanding the concept of hegemony and that power is not reliant on force. With his Marxist view, Gramsci implied that hegemony epitomized the rank of the most powerful country in the international system or within a specific region, as Mearsheimer claimed. As a point of interest, Robert Cox had closely examined Gramsci’s “perception of hegemony” who broadened his definition of the state to include “the underpinnings of the political structure in civil society ....historical terms – the church, the educational system, the press, all the institutions which helped create in people certain modes of

behaviour and expectations consistent with the hegemonic social order”, (Cox, 1994, p. 51).

“Power hierarchies”, (Nolte, 2010, p. 881), are an integral component of the concept of hegemony, which sees powerful states in competition with each other in order to become a supreme power in international politics. Notably, the stability of the system within the hierarchy of states is influenced by the position of the great powers. Smaller powers can change their positions up or down the hierarchy and have minimal effect on “the stability of the system”, (Gilpin, 1988, p. 596). To earn the hegemon status, contending powers must first become a “regional power”, (Nolte, 2010, p. 881). To this end, Nolte asserts, “Although the content of regional power is frequently used in International Relations (IR) literature, there is no consensus regarding defining characteristics of a regional power”, (Nolte, 2010, p. 881). IR text do have a common view that to be a regional hegemon a state must not only have extended its powers within the region and be a key player in several layers of the structures but be very powerful in its own standing. Reference is also made to the ranking table that will be presented in this paper to figure out if regional hegemony is possible or not possible, in the SPR.

It is crucial to also examine IR theories which contain selected source to support our knowledge of power relations and state’s security measures. Central to these theories are three significant concept of power, structure and hegemony. One of the major IR approach is that of realism which underscores the role of nation-states. From a “structural realism”, (Waltz, 1988, p. 618), perspectives, the international system indicates, “the essential structural quality of the system is anarchy – the absence of a

central monopoly of legitimate force”. According to Waltz, neorealism maintain that “effects of structure are added to the unit-level” account of “traditional realism”, (Waltz, 1988, pp. 617-618). Waltz then alerts us to “how structures affect actions and outcomes”, (Waltz, 1988, p. 617). He further added that neorealism rebuffs the idea “that man’s innate lust for power constitute sufficient cause of war in the absence of any other”.

Interestingly, in Waltz’s analysis, using the “logic of international politics“, he iterates that it is the interactions between “unit level” and presumably “at the level of structure” that brings about “international” result, (Waltz, 1988, p. 618). He further indicated that “structural realism presents a systemic portrait of international politics depicting component units according to the manner of their arrangement”, (Waltz, 1988, p. 618). Here a notion is formed that “states are cast as unitary actors wanting at least to survive” and are viewed as an integral part of the system, (Waltz, 1988, p. 618). The formation of foreign policy in Waltz scrutiny occurs around this point as he believes the creation of “foreign policy” should be concurrent to when “constructing a theory of international politics”, (Waltz, 1988, p. 618). He asserted that “a system theory of international politics deals with forces at the international level, and not at the national level”, (Waltz, 1988, p. 618). The process Waltz articulates illustrates that power struggle forms the core of international relations and to a realist this is when nation states maximize their interests. The structure as indicated in Waltz’s explanation is military power and cooperation. This is where it becomes difficult as a dominant state or hegemony in a region can assume control and turn the power balance to its advantage. In Waltz’s view, based on realist approach, it is power and related policies

that helps equip states to pursue more power in order to preserve or remove status quo, (Waltz, 1988).

Mearsheimer's view as an expert on this topic, asserts that "hegemony is the best strategy for a nation state" to pursue, if possible. He uses an "offensive realist" approach and maintain that "state will seek to maximize their power relative to others", (Mearsheimer, 2001). He stresses that realists ignore the emphasis on "anarchy and power" and as a result directs them to a weak outlook of "international law and international institutions", (Mearsheimer, 2001). To this end realists argue only state power can enforce law. Curiously, realist's view, believe that states create "international law and international institutions, and may enforce the rules they codify", (Slaughter, 2011, p. n.d.). The rules do not regulate how state acts according to Slaughter, it is the "underlying material interests and power relations", (Slaughter, 2011). It is evident that that there is great emphasis on wealth and 'power'. In Mearsheimer's perspectives, 'power' is defined as constructed "on material capabilities, specifically the sum of military and latent power", (Mearsheimer, 2001). He goes further and explains that the two dimensions noted, involve both the military/defense capabilities plus "wealth and population" being converted into "military power", (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 1).

Mearsheimer, refers to "unit of analysis" which resonates with Waltz's inquiry into states as unit. In his view, powerful states comprises of "rational actors", (Mearsheimer, 2001). This point is discussed further by Bates who affirmed that, 'great power' exercises its capacity to "think strategically and consider others' preferences, they pay attention to both long-term and immediate consequences", (Bates, 1975).

Mearsheimer also noted, that the occurring patterns of hegemonic behaviour indicated that, “System does not have status quo powers except for regional hegemons”, (Mearsheimer, 2001).

Curiously, Robert Gilpin cites Thucydides’ thinking, and alert us to “the idea that the dynamic of international relations is provided by the differential growth of power among states [which he claims] is the driving force of international relations [and] can be identified as the theory of hegemonic war”, (Gilpin, 1988, p. 591). The high degree of growth distinguishes the state that becomes a dominant power or become a hegemon as opposed to the minor power which will play by the pre-determined rules of the game set by the dominant power and remain subordinate. In “Thucydides’ theory”, Gilpin affirms, this “power” dynamics impact the “structure of the system or distribution of power among the states” (Gilpin, 1988, p. 592).

Evidently, hegemony constitutes enormous ‘power’ to attain the top tier of the ‘power hierarchy’ amongst states as actors. It signifies the “strategic nature of “hegemonic” relations among nation-actors using a game-theoretic model in which repeated play, incomplete information, and reputation are major elements”, (Alt, et al., 1988, p. 447). Stability will endure, as long as the superpower state remains a hegemon. To draw from Thucydides’ thoughts in Gilpin (1988, p.592), who asserts, “changes can take place if they do not threaten the vital interests of the dominant states and thereby cause a war among them”.

A hegemonic state secures its position at all levels in the system in order to retain stability in the region. This is critical for a superordinate power to maintain the balance



and status quo. Gilpin points out, “such a stable system has an unequivocal hierarchy of power and an unchallenged dominant or hegemonic power”, (Gilpin, 1988, p. 592). The superiority of US in East Asia, Goh notes, showcases its leading power pre and post-Cold War era due in part to the operational limitations of regional options as in the case of the security zones and territorial dispute in South China Sea. These shortcomings are evident, whilst the US institution continues to be supreme in East Asia region as highlighted in Goh’s account of hegemony. Goh’s analysis can be applied to the ‘American Lake’ period of post WWII and Cold War era in the SPR which can include the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as Steven Ratuva argued. Evidently, the apparent deficits of defined material and political alternatives in the region characterize the dominant state significantly.

The downside to this is when this dominant power or ‘hegemony’ is challenged and the situation is reversed from being ‘stable’ to ‘unstable’. In Gilpin’s interpretation, “an unstable system” is when changes occur which involve, “economic, technological, and other changes [erode] the international hierarchy and [undermine] the position of the hegemonic state”, (Gilpin, 1988, p. 592). An example of this in the SPR is China’s growing influence as opposed to the US or even the Colonial Powers such as Great Britain and France who still have some island nations within the SP sub-region under their realm or members of the Commonwealth.

It is apparent that for a super dominant state to assume the role of hegemony, it unilaterally constructs a system of structures that are layered. These structures constitute institutionalized frameworks modelled to the region it is aimed at, as in this instance, the SPR. The main purpose is to cater for the dominant power’s interests,

first and foremost, in areas such as political, economic or security issues. This allows the dominant power to engage and influence specific areas relevant to its interests such as regime formations. This is executed through established strategic alliances or arrangements with other states or organisations that it helps build up within and outside the region of its choice.

To do this, it requires co-operation and collaboration amongst states within the region and sub region with the hegemonic power which evidently plays the key role and dictates the rules of the game. Alt, et al (1988, p.447), argued that a large “feature” of the “hegemony theory” comes under the irregularity or unevenness of the size of states or what he terms “asymmetry of size”. Perhaps, this corresponds with Goh’s theory of “ordering of states” or the layered hierarchical view from the “superordinate” power to the subordinate states. Furthermore, it adds that “the central feature of hegemony theory is that the hegemon is “big” relative to others”, (Alt, et al., 1988, p. 447). This is further explained by Robert Keohane in (Alt, et al., 1988, p. 447) who reasserts that “it may be big in markets, big in capital, big in resources, or big in military power”.

An alternative view to this, as articulated does indicates that ‘hegemony’ means global dominance by a powerful state or “superordinate” (Goh, Evelyn., 2014). This is different from Mearsheimer’s view that no state can become a global hegemon, (Mearsheimer, 2001).

However, it must be noted, that, there are other authors who have a cultural take on the term hegemony. One of those is, Anthony J. Marsella, Professor Emeritus of Psychology, University of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii, who insists, ““hegemony”

constitutes a serious challenge for developing nations and traditional cultures because it locates the power for moulding national policies and decisions in the hands of “foreign” interests”, (Marsella, 2005, p. 16).

These thoughts resonate with the Pacific Islands in the SPR sub-region whose populations are below the one million mark excepting “Papua New Guinea (PNG) population of 7.476 million” (OECD, 2014). Furthermore, some of these island nations were colonized and now have become independent. Some of the Islands are still territories of the major powers such as the British, French and the US. To unpack Marsella’s thoughts on his version of hegemony, it is distinct that he implied, those big external powers that wield power in the region and effect as well as implement changes that impact the state’s “national policies and decisions”, (Marsella, 2005, p.16). This threatens the essence of these vulnerable island states and their established way of life, in this instance, the sub-region within SPR. Marsella’s believes these superpowers do receive gain for goods in return for their monetary contribution, be it aid or bilateral trade or investment. In addition, the big powers have the ability to implement and/or force changes often at such a rapid speed and thus impose their foreign will on these under-developed island states who are not ready for such massive transformation. This in turn creates confusion and as Marsella highlighted, the powers effecting these changes cause a ripple in the system and has a trickle-down effect onto the most vulnerable. It can also create a state of dependency from the subordinate weaker states.

Using Fiji, as a case example to demonstrate the effect of external institutions and powers mingled with ‘power grabbers’ within, it became a potent mix for the small

state. Fiji is part of the Melanesian sub-region, and is a weak island state that has been riddled with coup d'état since 1987 through to the last coup of 05 December, 2006. A reason given for the instability was attributed immediately after the “structural adjustment” as reported by Prasad and Kumar in (Ratuva, 2014, p. 2), which indicated the programs introduced by World Bank and a report written by Spate and Burns report in 1987. Fiji's first coup was executed by Sitiveni Rabuka soon after. Prasad and Kumar in Ratuva (2014, p. 2) had articulated, “Fiji's neoliberal policies were part of the structural adjustment programs by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) since the mid-1980s”, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 2). The changes received mixed reactions and Fiji coup culture has lasted for approximately twenty seven years, with the last coup held on 05 December, 2006 by Voreqe Bainimarama, that lasted eight years and has had crippling economic, political and cultural effect still felt today.

Moreover, according to Marsella (2005, p.16), hegemony, “also pressures minority populations [such as in SPR for] developed nations to assimilate and to conform to the dominant culture”. This is an area that needs further scholarly research in particular, for the smaller island nations in the SPR who are at the mercy of powerful players which Marsella terms as “major players in “hegemonic” globalization which include North American and Western European nations and their satellite nation partners, media, national and international financial institutions” such as; “(World Bank, IMF, WTO), and of course, multinational corporations who hold no national loyalty” (Marsella, 2005, p. 16).

This creates a sense of unease as the ‘superordinate’ state, as noted by Marsella asserting that the superordinate state acts in a “hegemonic” manner and imposes its

“values” as in the case of the U.S’s “popular culture, including individualism, materialism, competition, hedonism, rapid change (“progress”), profit, greed, commodification, consumerism, reductionism, celebritization, privatization, and English Language preference”, (Marsella, 2005, p. 16). The influence of these popular cultures has spread rapidly amongst the younger generations, making these “powerful values” (Marsella, 2005), very trendy to these youth. Furthermore, it is being reinforced and sustained by the formation of institutions and organisations.

These buttress the notion that these structures are deeply embedded in the system as widely read in IR literatures. These are layers of institutional framework that the dominant state sets up unilaterally in a given region to cater for its interests. These underpin the major actor to increase its presence within a region on a bilateral basis, allowing the more powerful state to dictate the rules of the game hence dominating other nations. It is evident that the influence of the prevailing state is significant over the others as it wields economic or military power by re-organising governance structures within the particular region it has influence in. To some extent it promotes and supports the regime formation within states in the region that will align with its intent on specific issues and gain cooperation this way. Here, we can see the effect of ‘power’ of the dominant state and how it uses its influence towards the formation of ‘regime’.

### **3.0 What are different ways of achieving hegemony?**

Power is critical for a state to claim hegemonic status. There have been significant debates among IR scholars in an attempt to define the attributes of a dominant state

that has achieved a hegemonic position. As earlier noted, to be a hegemon, the process begins at the regional level as a “regional power”, (Nolte, 2010, p. 881), where the relevant state assumes the top rank and becomes ‘superordinate’ (Goh, Evelyn., 2014). There is a systematic method of analysing the structure to distinguish “regional powers from other states and to compare regional powers with regard to their power status or relative power”, as asserted by Nolte (2010, p. 881). He further adds, to be a regional power or leader in the region, one requires “regional followers”, (Nolte, 2010, p. 894).

Nolte indicates, there are two important aspects to be considered for a state to achieve hegemony; 1) how ‘followership’ is defined or ‘conceptualised’ and 2) “the strategies of regional powers”, (Nolte, 2010, p. 894). These, Nolte asserts are relevant factors that attract some form of loyalty and “following”. Nolte indicated, scholarly enquiry on “regional architecture and power hierarchy in Southeast Asia demonstrates that the influence of minor or secondary powers on the configuration of a region and its institutional architecture could be quite significant”, (Nolte, 2010, p. 894). Conceivably, there are strong indicators of interactions at several levels in governance structures within and outside the region with a regional power, be it political, economic or cultural. To further illustrate these points, Nolte cites the US in its action within the East Asia Region and avows, “a strategy of embedding the middle powers, middle-tier states or regional powers”, (Nolte, 2010, p. 894). Curiously, China and India are cited. Perhaps, it can be argued that the US strategy in East Asia validates its influence and engagement as regional hegemon. The US is very powerful, it has 190 diplomatic ties with countries it has international relations with and plays a pivotal role in the region’s “multilateral institution”, (Nolte, 2010, p. 894). These are institutions set up by the

hegemonic power and examples of these are; Asia-Pacific Security Complex and APEC. This arrangement with states by the superordinate power, Nolte affirms, can work either way; “to influence their behaviour and make their actions calculable” or “used as instruments of discrimination and exclusion against other states”, (Nolte, 2010, p. 894).

Interestingly, Goh adds breadth to the hegemony theme and furthers the view that US is the regional power in East Asia, as it acts “as a central force in constituting regional stability and order”, (Goh, 2008, p. 353). She argues that the US is the “hegemony” and in her view the US projects such “superordinate” power in the region and this is what “defines regional order”, (Goh, 2008, p. 354). Goh’s thoughts reaffirm what Nolte had indicated above. However, with China’s emergence as a superpower, Goh asserts, it has challenged the status quo.

There are two distinct groups of scholars, which Goh calls “US-centric”, which favour the US regional strategy, (Goh, 2008, p. 354) and the “regional centric” which “stress the importance ‘indigenous’ security dynamics”, Mastanduno in, (Goh, 2008, p. 354). Goh, asserts, in this instance, the US-centric is contrary to the “regional-centric perspective”, as Mastanduno argued. Goh further distinguishes the two positions, asserting that while the U.S. “is dominant in the region”, Mastanduno’s view alters this power position of US assuming “hegemonic” role, Mastanduno, (2003) in (Goh, 2008, p. 354). In essence, based on Goh’s observation, the two distinct groups in East Asia shows that one favours the US as the hegemonic power and one favours China.

The situation becomes even more intriguing during this contemporary period, as critics predict and asserted by Mastanduno in Goh (2008, p.354), that China appears poised in the future to supersede the US in becoming the “hegemony in East Asia”, (Goh, 2008). Are similar games of geopolitics being played out in the SPR? Ironically, the US during post WWII and pre and post-Cold War period was the hegemonic power, (Ratuva, 2014, p.410). In this quarter of the contemporary period, the US has notably, maintained and strengthened its current military, maritime and defense relations with both Australia and New Zealand in SPR, as clear from the NZ White Paper stating “The United States (US) is likely to remain the pre-eminent military power”, (NZDefence, 2010, p. 11).

Goh also highlights another dimension of achieving hegemony tagged as “the ideational”, (Goh, 2008, p. 353). Goh argues this facet is crucial to a “layered rank order hierarchy”, (Goh, 2008, p. 353). This forms the crux of Goh’s argument where she establishes and replicates the distinct relationship between “sub- and super-ordination among states”, (Goh, 2008, p. 357). Here, one can see the ‘ordering of states’ as in ranking order where the superior power or ‘superordinate’ earns the pinnacle or highpoint. Goh claims “it’s a conceptual centrepiece [of what she insists] is a nuanced and complex notion of hegemony”, (Goh, Evelyn., 2014).

Goh underscored the need to analyse “ideational dimensions of international orders” which flags a shift from the “anarchy assumptions of structural realism” that Mearsheimer upholds. In other words, Goh’s analysis here illustrates a point of departure from Mearsheimer’s theory on the international politics’ narrative of “offensive realism” which centres on “great power behaviour”, (Mearsheimer, 2001).



Furthermore, Mearsheimer's theory has an authoritarian ring to it which imposes that "states should behave according to offensive realist dictates because they outline the best way to survive", (Mearsheimer, 2001).

In Mearsheimer's view, 'power' is the combination of "the sum of military power and latent power", (Mearsheimer, 2001). This involves in sum the military power which includes armed forces and naval as well as air forces. The addition of 'latent power' just means that the state has the ability to convert "assets of population and wealth into military power ('mobilizable' latent power)", (Mearsheimer, 2001). He further elaborates that the "dominance of land power" implies that, "success [is] defined by [the] ability to conquer and control territory", (Mearsheimer, 2001). Critics such as Robert Cox have argued, Mearsheimer has a limited version of power and overstates land power, (Cox, 1994). There is no mention of any non-military source of power. Mearsheimer's emphasis is focused on regional hegemony as status quo states when compared to Kenneth Waltz, who asserts, all states are status quo, (Waltz, 1988).

In the contemporary period, the significance of state actors, is included within "regimes" (Alt, et al., 1988, p. 446) even though regimes are rarely mentioned in Mearsheimer's account. These regime with power in the specific region define "actions for [subordinate] members and persist when members follow these prescriptions", (Alt, et al., 1988, p. 446) using "trade agreements" as an example. The analysis of dominant power by Alt et al, indicates that the supreme state has the 'power' to 'conquer' and 'control' in a region and sees the regime in that region as "cooperative solutions to repeated collective action games", (Alt, et al., 1988, p. 446). This reflects "many of the insights of hegemony theory [that] turns out to be features of a repeated game of

incomplete information”, (Alt, et al., 1988, p. 446). According to Alt et al, “games involving reputation” are linked as “dilemma”, (Stein 1984 in Alt et al, 1988, p. 446) or parameters of “hegemonic stability” (Alt, et al., 1988, p. 446). It is here that Snidal in Alt et al (1998, p.446) comments that the “distinction between “benevolent” and “coercive” strands of hegemony theory is thus subsumed within the unified model”, (Alt, et al., 1988, p. 446).

Goh has “three key” themes in an attempt to apply a cutting edge diagnostic approach to penetrate the current complex scholarly debates that surround “East Asian Security and US foreign policy” whether they point towards “theoretical extremes of realism versus liberalism”, (Goh, Evelyn., 2014, p. 21). In addition, Goh’s efforts to explore other “policy” choices of restrain or adapt; or blunt allegations that “China is either a security provider or security detractor (Ba)”, (Goh, Evelyn., 2014, p. 21). Despite the shift in thinking, Goh affirms, the US retains “hegemony” in East Asia”, (Goh, 2008, p. 354). Goh is undeterred by Mastanduno’s argument in page 16 of this paper.

No doubt, Goh examines the hegemony topic with a specialist perspective for East Asia region which I have drawn on to evaluate if hegemony is possible in the SPR. Goh defines ‘power’ in this instance, as “based on material capabilities” and asserts that the region “has preserved the material distribution of power”, (Goh, Evelyn., 2014, p. 22). In her view, whilst the US remains dominant in the region, there is “the regional preferences to incorporate the rising China, thus in effect creating a layered hierarchy with China, Japan, South Korea, and ASEAN states lining up beneath the overarching layer of US hegemony”, (Goh, Evelyn., 2014, p. 22). Perhaps, Goh’s expert views, when applied in a much small scale, can be translated into the South Pacific scenario

to assist in ascertaining whether hegemony is possible in the South Pacific Region and if it is, who will it be?

Can Goh's concept of a regional order be applied in the SPR? With China's interest gaining traction in the region and the US response in its Pacific Pivot, this means, further rigorous research is required into Goh's conception of rules and the means to sustain it, as well as, to promote and share or collaborate with SPR states that are like-minded or have dealings that are common to each other. These states impart common understandings of the type of interests and values as well as their limits or boundaries and conditions they operate within or are governed by. This defines the common theme or understanding the framework designed to assist each of these member states. It also allows each member state within the defined region, in this instance SPR, to be clear as to who are the actors involved, the expected behaviours and the process for state actor interactions with each other on an international regional space, be it a diplomatic or bilateral and/or multi-lateral arrangement. It is at this juncture, one distinguishes the part a powerful state plays as it assumes the role of hegemony in the region. The great power or superordinate state provides some form of stability with its leadership style and exerts its authority which as indicated earlier does give it some form of legitimacy by these subordinate states. This also gives that perception of the 'superordinate power' above the layered hierarchy patterns and hegemony.

Furthermore in Goh's analysis, 'regional ordering' is crucial to a hegemonic power. She believes "hegemonic order", (Goh, 2008, p. 354), is made possible in two ways; that whilst power is a critical factor in forming the collective foundation "from below", it

is also due to the leading power's capacity. So in essence, it works both ways, where hegemony endures by both these dynamics, as the 'superordinate' power is being given legitimacy by the subordinate powers, (Goh, 2008, p. 353). Whilst the US plays a key part in "East Asia's evolving security order" (Goh, 2008, p. 353), it re-asserts its place as a "central force in constituting regional stability and order" in the region and is not "treated as an extra-regional actor". She goes further and explains that the US leads the "layered regional hierarchy" (Goh, 2008, p. 353), with East Asian countries such as "China, Japan, and India constituting layers underneath its dominance". This then gives a clear indication that the state with hegemonic power is the most dominant until another state surpasses it.

Perhaps, this same scenario can be equated to that of the SPR when in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the U.S. was the dominant power in the Pacific region and earned its name, as the "American Lake" (Lattimore, 1945, p. 313). The US was predominantly, the superpower during this period and became a strong Western influence in SPR even till today. It had strong interaction with the SPR retaining similar strategy, and had been influential to the "PIFCs politically, economically and culturally", Keown et al, 2014 in, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 410). NZ, in its 2010 White Paper, recognises the "fragility" of the South Pacific and has asserted, it looks to "Australia" as its "most important security partner, [and stipulates] we will continue to play a leadership role in the region, acting as a trusted friend to our South Pacific neighbours", (NZDefence, 2010, p. 11). Australia, in turn has maintained its link with the US via the ANZUS Treaty which was signed on "1<sup>st</sup> September, 1951", (AustralianGovernment, 1951). Whilst NZ did appear to have weakened its ANZUS link with the US, it has since strengthened its diplomatic ties in 2010, under the "Wellington Declaration", signed by Minister of Foreign Affairs

for New Zealand Murray McCully and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton of the United States of America....4 November, 2010”, (NZGovernment, 2010). The “United States-New Zealand strategic partnership” reaffirms the link between the two nations, (NZGovernment, 2010). These arrangements re-assert Goh’s analysis on the effect of “layered regional hierarchy” (Goh, 2008, p. 353), after all NZ, Australia and the US plus all the Pacific Islands in SPR are all Pacific nations. However, only one state can act the part of hegemon. NZ had also reiterated, “As we look to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, our shared democratic values and common interests will continue to guide our collective efforts”, (NZGovernment, 2010).

As Ratuva noted, historically, the US, a dominant power in SPR have had strategic posturing then and even today as reaffirmed in NZ 2010 White Paper. The strategic stance is to “prevent any potential adversary from gaining a strategic posture in the South Pacific that could pose a challenge to its hegemony<sup>1</sup>”, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 410). The US, no doubt, acted the part of a regional power within the SPR geographical region and possessed supreme “superordinate”, (Goh, 2008) status and economic influence in the region.

The US, as the regional power and an independent powerful nation exercised great influence in neighbouring countries, not only in East Asia, as palpable from Goh’s account of the US influence in East Asia but also in the Pacific, particularly, the SPR. Ratuva reiterates this point when he cites Zarsky et al, (1986), that “the US [had] strategic and military dominance through its numerous bases, military networks and alliances around the Pacific and Pacific Rim countries”. He even indicated that the

US's tactic was grounded on the "strategic 'denial' doctrine which involved the central role of the ANZUS alliance...to keep the Pacific free of Soviet influence through aid, diplomacy and other means", (Ratuva, 2014, p. 410).

It was observed that the US decreased its arrangement with the Pacific Island Countries "PIFCs" as Ratuva noted, "because of priorities elsewhere and it was assumed that Australia, the United States closest ally in the Pacific, was to take care of the Pacific on its behalf as "deputy sheriff", Fry & Kutaulaka, (2008) in, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 410). Though, in recent years, China's rising power and its deepening engagement in the SPR, has prompted the US to re-adjust its "US strategic approach from indirect engagement to direct involvement", (Ratuva, 2014, p. 410).

Interestingly, to this end, Yang observes, "China's deepening involvement in the South Pacific is a calculated strategic move for its military security", (Yang, 2009, p. 139). Yet, he suggested, that the move may have a long term impact on "China's reunification strategy and it serves China's long term development strategy", it nevertheless, has minimal "strategic value of the South Pacific to China's national security", (Yang, 2009, p. 139). Yang cited Biddick (1989, p.802) affirming that "China's influence in the South Pacific appears to be growing rapidly", (Yang, 2009, p. 139) and "the PRC is likely to play a larger role as a Pacific maritime power". The debate regarding PRC's chequebook diplomacy, Hanson (2008) in (Yang, 2009, p. 142) indicated, "Chinese involvement in the region provides 'more opportunity than threat". An alternate view to this, indicates that PRC is flexing its muscle in the Pacific Islands region as a sign of diplomatic competition between PRC and Taiwan. Both countries offered soft loan or check-book diplomacy with minimal accountability and

which suited island political leaders quite well as their interests took priority over national development interests.

Goh (2008, p. 355), highlights the lack of challenges to the US “global preponderance”, (Goh, 2008, p. 369). She asserts there is little contest to the US status quo. The US still however, is dependent and “relies significantly on cooperation from other states to maintain its power”, (Goh, 2008, p. 355). Goh indicates, “three of the key potential global challengers to US unipolarity [will] originate from Asia (China, India, and Japan), and their support for or acquiescence to, US dominance have helped to stabilize global leadership”, (Goh, 2008, p. 369).

It appears, as Goh points out, that the US is the hegemon in East Asia, as opposed to Mastanduno’s view and reaffirms that the US sits on the pinnacle of that ranking order. This is a “form of hierarchy [that] refers to unequal relations among states” (Goh, 2008, p. 355). There is distinct differences “on hegemony or empire when thinking about hierarchy”. Two points Goh raises; hegemony and hierarchy and asserts, “the regional hierarchy in East Asia is still dominated by the United States”, (Goh, 2008, p. 368). US is the ‘superordinate’ power and below the layered hierarchy are other powers such as China, India, Japan and thereafter, the smaller subordinate powers. Since the 1970s China has “claimed the position of second-ranked great powers” which Goh argues, has been “legitimized by the hierarchical deference shown by smaller subordinate powers”, (Goh, 2008, p. 369). This Goh refers to as the ordering of states in the East Asia. This concept can also be applied to the SPR where China established itself and have become influential as the first external power to sign diplomatic links with the fourteen Pacific Islands states in the sub-region of the SPR. Alternatively, US

has deepened its strategic security engagement as evident from the outposts now located in several parts of Australia.

Goh sees one of the 'defining characteristics of hierarchical system as "voluntary subordination of lesser states to the dominant state", (Goh, 2008, p. 369). She uses Japan as an example, indicating that it is still under the US umbrella in its security alliance affirming, "Japan is not yet a 'normal' country", (Goh, 2008, p. 369). In addition, she implies "international hierarchies", (Goh, 2008, p. 355), constitute a varied scope where they ranges from "relationships of subordination and super-ordination within the anarchical state system". Kang further explains, the IR version Kenneth Waltz founded as an "alternative definition of hierarchy" and equates "hierarchy" and "anarchy" as "diametrical opposite", (Kang, 2015).

Within this setting, the US by occupying the top tier of the power hierarchy was able to maintain some form of stability, which in Goh's opinion was based not only on "coercion" but also on "consent", (Goh, Evelyn., 2014). The shade of Evelyn Goh's study of hegemony has somewhat given a heightened meaning to this aspect of state hierarchies. It is apparent that the super-powerful state can be equated to a state that has amassed an abundant build-up of power-currencies of sort, which ultimately secures the top rung of the ladder in a collection of states in a given region. To be a hegemon in the region, involves a complex process. To get to the high point, the state would have had to set up some mechanism such as geographical positioning, economic and defence capability, technological advances and its reliability including soft power facilities in its foreign policies. Goh's take on hegemony has a sharp social



component to it which in her analysis, allows actors to pursue validation and curb power disparities through promoting “institutionalised cooperation”, (Goh, 2008).

Here, one can visualise the divergence of views of difference with models of hierarchies widely discussed in IR literatures that benefit either the two approaches of ‘consent’ and/or ‘coercion’. Goh’s approach towards the concept of hegemony is one of regional order which is hegemonic in nature and dynamic. The process undergoes ongoing changes, adjustment and evolves within the regional order. In Goh’s theory, it is the “order transition” that trumps the “power transition”, (Goh, 2008, p. 354). Goh’s account with regards to favouring the “order transition rather than power transition as the central problematic driving regional politics since 1989”, (Goh, Evelyn., 2014, p. 1). This reveals that the regional order with its layered tiers up to the top of the hierarchy and below create challenges more than the superordinate power itself. Kang wraps this up precisely when he stated, “In sum, hegemony is a form of hierarchy that involves more than material power; it also involves a set of norms – social order- that secondary states find legitimate thus making it a social system”, (Kang, 2015, p. 31).

Given the significant or dominant role the US plays within the East Asia and the SPR region and the evolving nature within the international system, China’s rise alerted the US to adjust its current position. It is the most powerful in East Asia and while the US has recognised that China is an emerging great power, it will take a while before it can be declared a hegemony. It is evident from Goh’s account in East Asia and in Mearsheimer’s viewpoint, that the US will remain the superordinate power as it had “maximized” its “relative power” (Mearshiemer, 2012). Mearsheimer asserts, this is the best way to survive as a hegemon. Furthermore, the superordinate state validates its

position as a regional power within a geographical zone and possesses unrivalled super power status and economic influence in that particular region, (Mearsheimer, 2001). He adds that the US has this advantage, as it already dominates the Western Hemisphere and this has allowed the US to “roam freely” in that part of the world, (Mearsheimer, 2014). To this end, the US will not allow competition. How then, can this apply to an emerging power like China which appears to have established itself well into the SPR?

A hegemonic power controls the region, in essence and it wields hyper-ordinate power and is accorded acceptance of that in return by the subordinate powers which include both middle and minor powers that it has struck some sort of covenant or agreement with. This behaviour is what sets a regional hegemon apart. It is clear that the US played this role well for a very long time both in the East Asia region and also in the Pacific post 1945 through to the Cold War period. Though, it has been duly recorded that the US response to China’s global rising power and its emergence in South East Asia and SPR has forced the US to adapt to the changes.

#### **4.0 Who May Have Been/Could Be a Hegemon in the South Pacific?**

Geographically, the SPR has considerably more ocean than landmass, now commonly coined as the ‘Pacific Ocean of Peace’ or Pacific the “peaceful ocean”, <sup>2</sup> (NOAA, 2014). Steven Ratuva, a seasoned Pacific Political Scientist of Fijian-Indigenous heritage emphasized that “the late Fijian-Tongan anthropologist Epeli Hau’ofa (1993) coined the phrase ‘our sea of islands’”, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 409). Clearly, Ratuva alluded, and further unpacked Hau’ofa’s views that the “Pacific, [is] not a group of tiny

and disparate islands in an empty ocean”, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 409). He iterated that it is instead, “a large oceanic continent that defined the Pacific people’s sense of being and primordial claim to sovereignty and ownership of their oceanic cosmology”, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 409).

Using the lenses from the smaller island states to examine the ‘regional order’ and ‘powers’ closer to home in the SPR, it is crucial to reflect on what Hau’ofa articulated, “We have passed through that stage into the Pacific Islands Region of naked, neo-colonial dependency. Our erstwhile suitors are now creating with others along the rim of our [South Pacific] ocean a new set of relationships that excludes us totally”, (Hau’ofa, 1998, p. 398). Hau’ofa seems to alert us to internal and external power dynamics or even rivalry of ‘powers’ in the region which appears to have a default setting in excluding the islands. Why? He asserted, “our exclusion” would not have mattered if it was elsewhere, however, the smaller islands in the SPR, “are physically located at the very center of what is occurring around us”, (Hau’ofa, 1998, p. 398). Most SPR island states places NZ and Australia, as actors at the “rim”, (Hau’ofa, 1998, p. 398), as opposed to being within. For the purpose of this paper, and considering the geographical scoping of the SPR, both countries have a place within the ‘rim’. It is how they both act their part in the SPR that is crucial in order to understand both powers’ strategies and policy. This point is further explored in the ranking table which identifies NZ and Australia as the two main donors in the SPR. Yang in his effort to “present an in-depth analysis of China’s ‘hegemonic rise’ in the South Pacific” reiterates the point that this may “threaten Western interests”, (Yang, 2009, p. 142). In Yang’s view, both Australia and New Zealand are “regional powers”, (Yang, 2009, p. 142) in the SPR.

Nonetheless, it is important to indicate the role of external powers, China and the US have in the SPR while attempting to ascertain if hegemony is possible in the in the SPR region. Yang asserts that, “China’s long-term goal is to ultimately replace the United States as the pre-eminent power in the Pacific Ocean”, (Yang, 2009, p. 141). Meanwhile, the “governments of many Pacific states” according to Yang, “welcome the Chinese involvement in the region”, (Yang, 2009, p. 141). Critics are already predicting that “the rivalry between China and the United States in the South Pacific has already begun”, (Yang, 2009, p. 141). Already, media outlets, as noted in Yang, have echoed sentiments that “consistent signals to the region and the world at large<sup>3</sup>”, have begun in earnest with Washington indicating “that it intends to firmly drop anchor in the world’s single largest geographical feature, the Pacific Ocean”, (Yang, 2009, p. 141). As was noted in 2007, Washington, after sending senior officials to the regional forum in SPR “took twenty island leaders for a meeting in Washington, DC, the first to be held on the mainland”, (Yang, 2009, p. 141).

It is evident that the “power concept of regional powers”, (Nolte, 2010, p. 898), as observed is a good “starting point for mapping internal structure of regions and the type of regional power (s) in each region”, (Nolte, 2010, p. 898). Nolte elaborates on these lines and affirmed the questions as to “who will dominate and set the rules..?”, (Nolte, 2010, p. 896). These thoughts echo Huntington’s prediction of “multipolar twenty-first century”, (Nolte, 2010, p. 896). How does this affect the future regional structure for SPR in particular the vulnerable and weaker, troubled island states in the Arc of Melanesia or just all the smaller islands in the region?

Goh's analysis of 'power' here, relates to material and military/defense capability. She distinguishes 'power' from 'order' in the region and asserts the two words had raised some concerns from Western scholars who had critiqued her book. It is obvious the concept of 'power' and 'power transition' in her view is a realist take for the "overly materialist conceptualizations of power and order" as well as their bias conflict", (Goh, Evelyn., 2014, p. 8).. The emphasis is to critically examine states within the region "that are powerful" in particular those with "material resources and capabilities", (Nolte, 2010, p. 884).

Using the SPR as a geographical backdrop, it can be argued that Australia could fit into this category as a country that tries "to exercise leadership in this regional [SPR] setting", (Nolte, 2010, p. 884). New Zealand, as an internal actor like Australia, would rate as the 2<sup>nd</sup> tier within the South Pacific regional hierarchy. Pacific Islands, such as Papua New Guinea and Fiji are the only two that possess some form of military and defense capacity but are geared more towards United Nations' Peace keeping missions to promote global security rather than being an island with military capability per se. Within the regional structure and as noted in the table chart for this paper, the distinction between "regional powers and regional leadership", (Nolte, 2010, p. 884) begins to emerge. Likewise, if we are to probe into the areas of "regional powers and power hierarchies", (Nolte, 2010, p. 884), in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it poses a challenge as to how the dominant blueprint of regional hegemony can be ascertained. In addition, Nolte is of the view that it is possible for "regional powers [to] exploit or depend on the regional governance structures as part of their strategy for achieving regional hegemony", (Nolte, 2010, p. 884).

Perhaps, the notion, that Feizkhah (2001, p.34) in Yang asserts, may come to fruition in the SPR, that in the next few years “a collection of states [will] owe their primary allegiance to a country outside our alliance”, (Yang, 2009, p. 141). No doubt, one of the challenges is embedded within what Yang articulates, that Oceania “could no longer be taken for granted” and persist to be “a relatively benign ‘American Lake”, (Yang, 2009, p. 141). To this end, Beijing has skilfully put in place in the SPR “a combination of trade, aid and skilful diplomacy”, as its groundwork “for a new regional order with China as the natural leader and the United States as the outsider”, (Yang, 2009, p. 141).

However, there is a slant to the story, as J. Yang aptly puts, “Beijing is unlikely to be a dominant military power in the South Pacific in the foreseeable future”, (Yang, 2009, p. 147). Furthermore, Yang asserted, “While Washington was watching China’s ‘hard’ power, China had been building up its ‘soft’ power in the South Pacific”, (Yang, 2009, p. 147). Ratuva reasserts this point when he stated, “In contrast, China is more focused on ‘soft power’ approach through diplomacy and economic relations”, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 411). These lines resonate well with the points both, Epeli Hau’ofa and Steven Ratuva articulated with regards to what defines the “sovereignty and ownership” of the South Pacific ocean. It poses a challenge to the ‘superordinate’ powers for the choices therein, now available for subordinate states in the SPR more so the Pacific island states to either align with a superpower that offers ‘hard power’ or ‘soft power’ or even both.

To this end, the foreign policies and diplomatic approach by the US and China seems to favour one or the other or a mingling of both. Yang (2009, p.141), appears adamant that “a great power rivalry for dominance seems inevitable”. Windybank (2005, p.20) in (Yang, 2009) reaffirms in Yang, who “emphasizes that ‘Foreign policy pundits are already calling a new geopolitical game of power politics and interstate rivalry as a rising China seeks to draft as many countries as possible into the sphere of influence“, (Yang, 2009, p. 141). A good example of this will be the 14 Pacific islands that have signed diplomatic ties with PRC. This points towards the fact that “the [established] Pacific Ocean could in future become the venue for a new Cold War, where the United States and China compete for client states and strategic advantage”, (Yang, 2009, p. 141). It is useful to cite Robert Gilpin, in this instance, when he illustrated what Thucydides wrote in his Treatise, “...he [Thucydides] was addressing, “those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to the interpretation of the future, which in the course of human things must resemble if it does not reflect it..”, (Gilpin, 1988, p. 591). If one was to interpret China and the US behaviour within SPR, in an effort to answer the hegemony question for this paper, then Thucydides, was on point in defining ‘the behaviour and phenomena that he observed [of state powers which] would repeat themselves throughout history”, (Gilpin, 1988, p. 591), and which we now call “international relations”.

Notably, the US promoted its “Year of the Pacific”, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 414) strategy under its US “43<sup>rd</sup> President George W. Bush”, (Freidel & Sidey, 2006), administration and urged on by President Obama’s “pivot [which] is much more comprehensive and encompassing”, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 414). Even more interesting for SPR is what Ratuva calls, “the ‘spill-over’ of the pivot on PIFC’s”, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 414), as this impacts

on the “geopolitical interconnectedness between Asia and the Pacific”, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 414). He iterates that the “Pacific is the common ‘shared’ space between China and the United States”, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 414). Ratuva further argued, “it is where they [China and US] define, project and protect their respective sovereign sea borders, thus both see themselves as Pacific powers”, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 414).

The trend of rivalry between the two big powers SPR is evident as the US steps up its engagement and policies in the region as Ratuva asserted, that the “Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders (PIFCL) triennial meeting in Washington DC” in 2007 covered important issues such as , “expansion of public diplomacy, strengthening economic ties, US military expansion in Guam and impact on the region, cultural and educational exchanges, aid, trade, global warming and democracy”, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 411). Furthermore, in “September 2012, Ms Clinton...at the Post-Forum Dialogue at Pacific Island Forum leaders meeting in Rarotonga, Cook Islands”, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 411) restated the point that “she committed long-term US aid and engagement with the PIFCs and declared that the ‘Pacific is big enough for all of us’, an obvious reference to China and other foreign powers”, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 411).

Whilst China pursued “its soft power in the South Pacific”, (Yang, 2009, p. 147), the US appeared focused on its ‘hard power’ approach as was noted during the ‘American Lake’ influence, “American warfighting strategy and foreign policy have heightened the nuclear danger in the Pacific”, (Hayes, et al., 1986, p. 4). Whilst Hayes comments may appear dated, it still echoes some truth in the current day ‘power’ and ‘order’ dynamics in SPR.



As a point of interest, Rosemary Foot, indicated the year 2009 had witnessed “top American and Chinese officials [who] have repeatedly stressed that the two countries are ‘in the same boat’ and need to work together to weather the storm of several crises”, (Foot, 2009, p. 123). Her “boat metaphor” is powerful as she emphasises that the “successful voyage requires a single designated captain; orders, given harshly or kindly, are expected to be obeyed; and there has to be agreement on the rules of navigation”, (Foot, 2009, p. 123). In Foot’s views her boat analogy speaks volume and seizes the critical points of “cooperation and competition contained within the Sino-American relationship”, (Foot, 2009, p. 123).

Evidently, Foot stresses that “we are witnessing a transition of power from the United States to China which might well involve intense rivalry and potentially even war”, (Foot, 2009, p. 123). This is the new security dilemma in the Asia-Pacific region which has enjoyed relative peace since 1979, but “the strategic architecture has been unsettled by China’s growing influence [in this instance in SPR] and [its] ability to project power”, (Foot, 2009, pp. 123-4). The question that arises and as asserted by Foot, is whether China’s growth of power and influence is parallel to the U.S. policy towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. On closer examination, whilst both the US and China’s interest in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century may be about the sea routes that spread across the Pacific Oceans, the US still retains the upper hand as it has a tight security alliances with Australia and New Zealand and other island states in SPR. This is despite China’s increased trade and diplomatic ties with New Zealand. Whilst Yang claims, “It has become trendy to talk about China’s soft power” (Yang, 2009, p. 147), the US, on the other hand, has maintained to remain focused on its mission to engage and strengthen its relationship in the region. Perhaps, it can be argued that history is

being rewritten and it is no longer viable to retain that label of calling the Pacific, “The American Lake”, (Hayes, et al., 1986).

As a point of interest, when revisiting Ratuva’s poignant comments, indicating, “the notion of ‘our sea’ has been expropriated and redefined in a new lexical context as competing hegemons in the form of the United States and China stake their claim and legitimacy in the Pacific”, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 409). Ratuva does challenge the SPR and others creating an awareness to riveting dynamics of superpower play in the region that has eventuated into the first quarter of 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Ratuva’s thought also resonate with Goh’s analysis of ‘hegemonic order’ which works well on a dual basis, “from below” and the ‘superordinate’ power’s capacity, (Goh, 2008, p. 353). Ratuva, highlights, “the United States and Chinese engagement in the Pacific manifests a clash of foreign policies that mimics the cold war confrontation of post-World War II era”, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 409). To this end, I agree.

Certainly, the two great powers, China and the US, boasting large landmasses and possess hegemonic characteristics, as apparent from the ranking table cited in this paper, and as the two ‘superordinate’ powers appear to be on a path of “rivalry”, (Yang, 2009, p. 141), to further their interests and influence in the Pacific region. Interestingly, Yang noted, “the region’s Island Business Magazine published an editorial in June 2007 claiming that; “the United States of America has sent consistent signals to the region and the world at large that it intends to firmly drop anchor in the world’s single largest geographical feature, the Pacific Ocean””, (Yang, 2009, p. 141).

PRC, in the late 1990s had courted the island leaders since it stepped up its increased interests and influence in the SPR. IR scholars have attempted to diagnose PRC’s

deepening interest in the region with some concluding that it is related more to the China-Taipei saga. Yang claims that PRC aims to be a major actor in the SPR, more so, to be the “Pacific maritime power”, (Yang, 2009, p. 140).

US on the other hand, responded to PRC’s interests and influence by re-engaging with the region. It has re-emerged even though critics say, it never left the region and have re-invigorated its involvement in the SPR. Furthermore, it is poignant to mention Hillary Clinton as former US Secretary of State had earlier “accused China of ‘wine and dine’ diplomacy by inviting leaders in Beijing as well as its support for Fiji’s ‘dictatorial regime’”, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 418). Mrs Clinton’s tune changed again when she visited Australia a year after, which Ratuva noted to be “conciliatory”, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 418). Observers were quick to remark on Mrs Clinton’s Australian speech that it was similar to what “China’s Assistant Foreign Minister Le Yucheng in December 2011 [said]...We hope the United States can play a constructive role in this region [Asia-Pacific] and that includes respecting China’s major concerns and core interests. The Pacific Ocean is vast enough to accommodate the coexistence and cooperation, not confrontation between these two big countries”, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 418).

In order to further understand the power dynamics, it may be worthwhile to revisit John Mearsheimer, (2001), who used the analogy of large landmass to equate “landpower” and seapower”. Mearsheimer argues there can only be one hegemon in the region. There is a point of difference by two academics as Goh reasserts that the U.S. is hegemon for East Asia whilst Ratuva (2014, p. 409), argues, US and China are hegemons in the South Pacific region. These views are not reflected in the ranking

table prepared for this paper as both the US and PRC do not rank as top donors in SPR.

Nevertheless, it is evident both the US and China have visibly deepened their engagement in the SPR. Interestingly, the US strategy of military operations [during] the Cold War era extended from “Aleutian Islands off the coast of Alaska to China and the Soviet Far East and encompassing all the Pacific and Indian Ocean....covers nearly half of the surface of the earth”, (Hayes, et al., 1986, p. 4). Today, US has set up newer bases in Australia and have strengthened its security and defense arrangements in the region. During this period, there were already claims by the US that “the Pacific [was] primarily a maritime theatre....and the Pacific a Navy precinct”, (Hayes, et al., 1986, p. 4). These thoughts by Hayes project the rigour of a ‘hyper-power’ with military/maritime muscle considering that Hayes et Al. paper was penned in 1986 and the issues of power have are complex, if we are to cite Ratuva, Goh, Yang and Foot’s most recent positions on the Sino-American rivalry. The momentum is gathering towards some newer version of Pacific Islands Monroe Doctrine of sorts. Who will be the hegemon in the region, will it be China or the US?

Notably, a Chinese scholar, described the “Pacific Island countries (PICs) [as] developing countries with small land areas and small populations”, (YU, 2014). This is in contrast to the two great powers, US and China, both possessing ‘landpower’ and ‘seapower’. Closer to home, within the SPR, are the two middle powers; NZ and Australia. Interestingly, as YU iterated, “The Pacific has become ‘an important strategic link in China’s greater periphery diplomacy [中国大周边战略的重要环节]’ for China in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, (YU, 2014). Undoubtedly, China as similar to the US and

other early colonizers in the region are aware that some of these islands as noted in YU, “are rich in natural resources, especially minerals and marine resources”, (YU, 2014).

The question that arises, are these resources, the reasons why these superpowers have descended into the SPR where games of convergence and competition seem to be the order of the day? Or is it a new wave of colonization of the SPR re-packaged in the contemporary sense? Perhaps, it may be just to secure trade routes and/or military/maritime strategy, seeing that both the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean now tagged as “Indo-Pacific”, (Indo-Pacific Governance Research Centre, 2015) are lucrative strategic points that cover “nearly half of the surface of the earth”, (Hayes, et al., 1986, p. 4). It is vital that the social aspect of hegemony, as noted by both David Kang and Evelyn Goh needs to be configured into the conversation. It reaffirms points earlier noted in Goh’s analysis on the ‘regional order’, that it is the “order transition” as opposed to “power transition” that is crucial. Whilst scholarly research literatures articulate the importance that besides the SPR, the new shift to embrace the “rising Indo Pacific powers” (Indo-Pacific Governance Research Centre, 2015) is gaining momentum. This aspect is another moot point that requires further scholarly research as it does impact on Goh’s argument of “order transition” and “power transition”, (Goh, 2008, p. 354).

What Goh has identified with “order transition” and “power transition” can be linked to the European imperial powers’ strategy in SPR during the 19<sup>th</sup> century when historically, the British and the French colonized the region. These imperial powers introduced regimes that replicated their own style of governance on a much smaller

version. Britain assisted by Australia and NZ helped set up institutions in the region such as Pacific Island Forum (PIF) which still exists today. Educational institutions and communications were established. A modified version of democratic system of government blended with social constructs of the small island nations were set up, remnants of which are still evident today. This does relate to hegemonic characteristics that Goh identified with the added 'social' component added. Does this make either the French or the British hegemon during this time? It could have been for Britain. According to Hayes et al, "By the end of the [2<sup>nd</sup> world] war Europe's colonial hold in the Pacific was mortally wounded", (Hayes, et al., 1986, p. 11). These thoughts are further noted by Eleanor Lattimore when she referred to the "Pacific Theatre" and "American Lake" (Lattimore, 1945). Lattimore reaffirmed that into the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the US and the colonizers in the region appeared to have carved up the Pacific amongst themselves with little or no input from the inhabitants of these islands. Some of the islands that were oblivious to the outcomes soon found themselves grouped into SPR with sworn allegiance to the powerful nations of faraway shores like Britain, France and America. Today, perhaps due to geographical proximity, NZ and Australia have assumed the role Britain once had in the region during the colonial era. In examining the recent developments in the SPR, it is evident that there is strong competition between the two powers; US and China. The Pacific had earlier been dubbed as the 'Pacific Theatre' and as Lattimore affirmed, "the United States [had proposed] to make an American lake out of the Pacific Ocean" (Lattimore, 1945, p. 313). Although, this may have been set in the past, it still resonates with the intent that the US wants to retain its status as a dominant power in the Pacific region. Historically, critics queried this same motive by the US motives asking "by what authority [US] claim the right to do so", (Lattimore, 1945, p. 313). Interestingly, some powers, as Lattimore

noted, were concerned about the US's relationship and its "claims" when other "nations" such as Britain and France also had "interests" in the Pacific, (Lattimore, 1945, p. 313). Based on Lattimore's observation, could the US fit the criteria of a hegemon in the SP region then? After all America had assumed authority and claimed its right for the loss of lives and cost of setting up naval bases in strategic locations in the Pacific region which it built on "island territories of Allied Nations"? (Lattimore, 1945, p. 313).

Fast-track this scene to this 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, a similar strategy is being played out only this time it is not the Soviet Union that the US is keeping its eyes on, it is the PRC. With the "Asia-Pacific pivot", (Ratuva, 2014, p. 414), announced during President Obama's administration, reaffirmed and saw the upsurge of US engagement in the Pacific. Ratuva affirmed this was the US response through its "broad strategy to 'rebalance' power in the Asia-Pacific region in response to Chinese economic, political and military interests"<sup>4</sup>, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 414).

The US became the "superordinate" in the SPR, however, this has shifted with China's influence and emergence as a new power in the region. Whilst, it appeared that the imperial competition was truly over within the Pacific region, on another level, a much more dangerous new direction had surfaced, "The superpowers are on the road toward nuclear war", (Hayes, et al., 1986, p. ix). It was during this period that the Pacific earned its name the "American Lake", (Hayes, et al., 1986). Perhaps Hayes' study needs further analysis, in particular, his thoughts on the switch in "superpowers military strategy [which] make it as likely that World War III could break out in the Pacific", (Hayes, et al., 1986, p. ix). At the time The South Pacific, as part of the Pacific

scene, faced increased threat of a nuclear war. Notably, “it was in the Pacific, not in Europe, that the first atomic bomb was exploded in war”, (Hayes, et al., 1986, p. 1). It is evident that the Pacific had become dangerously embroiled as a target ground for “superpower nuclear arms race”, (Hayes, et al., 1986, p. 4). NZ as a signatory to the ANZUS Treaty, was suspended from ANZUS in 1986, due to its part in initiating a nuclear-free zone in its territorial waters. NZ promoted a nuclear-free Pacific and had banned US ships into NZ which meant a souring of relations between NZ- US relations. The upside to this, thanks to NZ for ensuring a nuclear-free Pacific. The ban was lifted by United States, after twenty six (26) years as announced by its US Secretary of Defence, Leon Panetta during her visit to New Zealand in September, 2012. Defense relations between the two countries improved and reinforced security relations noted in the “2010 NZ White Paper”, (NZGovernment, 2010). Meanwhile, the US-China rivalry are obvious today in the SPR.

To align with a state with superordinate power gives a form of stability to the region. It has the ability to engage and develop strategies that promote “hegemonic relations among rational nation-actors”, (Alt, et al., 1988, p. 445). The powerful actor has the capacity to “effect distributional outcome in situation where actors compete over shares at the same time they cooperate to produce a good”, (Alt, et al., 1988, p. 445). This scenario gives the powerful actor legitimacy to attain the top level of almost absolute power and be declared a hegemon and have strong connections to regimes. In further examining the conduct of superpowers such as US and China, the concept of hegemony and power component are further emphasised. The US undoubtedly, possessed “structural characteristics”, (Nolte, 2010, p. 889). It wields material and economic power with a degree of ferocity. The swing of the “American warfighting



strategy and foreign policy have heightened the nuclear danger in the Pacific”, (Hayes, et al., 1986, p. 4).

This aspect is evident in the case of East Asia, the US was not “treated as an extra-regional actor”, (Goh, 2008, p. 353). Furthermore, deeply embedded within the SPR, lies support for the US as a Western superpower. This is evident from the ANZUS Pact that binds the two countries together as well as ongoing defense and security arrangements with Australia in the contemporary period. (Australian Government, 1951). The West means shared history, mutual understanding, common language, common regional allies such as Australia and NZ in the SPR. Hayes reiterated the US view that, “Allies not only host forward-deployed American forces; they also provide political legitimacy for the US military role in the region”, (Hayes, et al., 1986, p. 4). At the time according to Hayes, the “American military strength”, (Hayes, et al., 1986, p. 4) meant it brought with it “stability”. Goh endorsed similar sentiments and affirmed that the US gave stability to East Asia region in the contemporary period.

In contrast, Ratuva is of the view that the “geopolitical dynamics has consequently stretched the ontological boundaries of ‘our sea’ to include the United States and China who now see themselves as an inseparable ‘part’ of the Pacific”, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 409). This does highlight the debate about who is the hyper-power in the region? Is it China or the U.S.? This forces one to deliberate on the question of power and hegemony in the SPR during the contemporary period. At this point, it compels one to revisit the Cold War era when the Soviet Union was viewed as the main threat at the time. The scenario appears to replicate the other, only this time there is a change of hyper-power actors involved.

However, with the shift towards China as a great power more diplomatic engagement has surfaced. Whilst the 'American Lake' book exposes a hard core realist have relevant during the period being written about, it gives readers an insight into the US approach which is distinctive of its military prowess. It also gives a clue as to how the US acted during that era. Furthermore, the fierceness of US's military intent is palpable when attempting to extrapolate relevant information from the 'American Lake' book, which to a degree borders on power, competition, greed and domination. In one of the pieces the article cites the "New Militarist" (Hayes, et al., 1986, p. 4) stating, "American diplomacy and economic influence rest on military muscle", (Hayes, et al., 1986, p. 4). This is further affirmed by a comment made by a senior naval officer who had said, "Nothing below clear superiority will suffice", (Hayes, et al., 1986, p. 6).

Yang, in his analysis of China, as being a possible hegemon in the SPR, remains adamant that "despite China's growing presence in the region, it is still a relatively minor player in the region's institutions compared to the long-dominant Western powers", (Yang, 2009, p. 152). In his views, China still requires to build its "capability" in order to be able to take the lead role "or control the transnational consensus formation" in the SPR. He uses the example of China as guest and not a member within the PIF, initially founded by the British administration with membership comprising of island states and NZ and Australia. Other SPR bodies do not include China as a member. China sees this as a disadvantage. China also views Australia and NZ as committed powers within SPR, geographically, they are part of this region and this is interpreted to indicate that "Beijing's policy options in the South Pacific are [further] limited", (Yang, 2009, p. 152).

Interestingly, Dr. Marc Lanteigne, an expert in the Asia-Pacific Security Complex affirms, while “China expands its foreign policy interests and strategic power further into the Pacific Ocean, a division is developing between Beijing’s policies in the western Pacific”, (Lanteigne, 2012, p. 21). The power play of political might of two great powers and their foreign policies in the region mirror and/or replicate what transpired during post World War II period through to pre and post-Cold War era. China’s entry into the South Pacific is timely as, it seems, while the US is heavily engaged in the European Ukraine crisis and its effort to curb war on terror in the Middle East, China has deepened its engagement in the South Pacific. China’s sees the role played in the region by NZ and Australia as an “extension”, (Lanteigne, 2012, p. 21) of the US. Lanteigne affirmed China enlarged its influence in the region through its “soft aid program” and has gained a place of prominence amongst the 14 independent island states from within the sub-region of Melanesia, Polynesia but not as much in Micronesia where the US has strong influence.

## 4.1.1

Table 1: Donor Countries Providing Aid to South Pacific Countries.

Donor States	Population	GDP 2012 US\$ Trillion	AID in US\$ Million ODA 2012	Geo-Landmass	Military Defense 2013 US\$	GDP US\$ Trillion PPP 2014	Nuclear Warhead	Regime	Embassies Diplomatic Relations
United States	319.0 m	16.163200	168	9.16 m. sq km	640 b.	17.42	7,300	Const. Dem.	157
China	1.370 b	8.229490030100	688.78*	9.3 m. sq km	188 b.	17.62	250	Communist	22
United Kingdom	64.07 m	2.614946487603	n/a	241, 930.00	57 b.	2.549	225	Const. Monarc	76
New Zealand	4.543 m	0.171461397176 b.	228	268, 021 sq km	2634 m. NZ\$	158.9 b.	0	Parl. Dem	30
Australia	23.18 m	1.534425905763	1147	7. 62 m. sq km	25715 m. AUD\$	1.095	0	Fed.Dem.Par	unlisted
France	66.20 m	2.686722589270	136	547, 561 sq km	61.200 b.	2.581	300	Republic	unlisted
European Union Supra-State	503 m	17.251951436183	86	139, 988.sq km	\$300 b.	18.01	n/a	Supra-State	unlisted
Japan	126.1 m	5.954476603962	128	374, 744 sq km	48.6 b.	4.751	0	Par. Fed. Rep	111
India	1.267 b	1.858744737181	n/a	2.97 m. sq km	47.4 b.	7.376	90-110	Fed. Republic	68
Rep. Korea	50.34 m	1.222807167489	n/a	98, 190 sq km	33.9 b.	1.781	0	Republic	30
Indonesia	252.8 m	0.876719347689 b.	n/a	1, 811, 570.00	87500 b. rupiah	2.676	0	Republic	41
Qatar	2.268 m	0.190289829681 b.	n/a	11, 610.00	6831 m.riyals [2010]	320.5 b.	0	Emirate	4
Russian Fed	141.0 m	0.169396055591 b.	n/a	17m. sq km	2796 b. roubles	3.565	8,000	Federal	27

## 4.1.2

Table 2: South Pacific Countries Receiving Aid.

SPR- Recipients	Population	GDP 2012 US b/m.	ODA-Rcvd USD million 2012	Geo-Landmass	Military Defense	GDP US\$ Billion PPP 2014	Nuclear	Regime Type	Embassies Diplomatic Relations
PNG	7.476 m	\$15.29 b.	665	452, 860 sq km	107 m. dollars	18.07	n/a	Const. P.Dem	2
Fiji	887,00	\$3.855 b.	107	18, 270 sq km	187 m. kina	7.293	n/a	Republic	11
Vanuatu	258, 000	\$828.2 m.	101	12, 200 sq km	n/a	665.7 m.	n/a	Par. Rep	unlisted
Tonga	106,000	\$466.3 m.	78	720 sq km	n/a	500 m.	n/a	Con. Mon	unlisted
Samoa	192,000	\$801.9 m.	121	2, 934 sq km	n/a	994 m.	n/a	Parl. Dem	unlisted
Solomon Is	573,000	\$1.096 b.	305	27, 990 sq km	n/a	1.09	n/a	Parl. Rep	unlisted
Wallis & Futuna	15, 500	\$12, 640	120	274 sq km	n/a	60 m. [2004]	n/a	Parl. Rep	unlisted
FSM	104,000	\$316.2 m.	115	718 sq km	n/a	n/a	n/a	Const. Gov	unlisted
Marshall Is	53,000	\$190.9 m.	76	180 sq km	n/a	181 m.	n/a	Const. Gov	unlisted
Kiribati	104,000	\$169.0 m. [2013]	65	811 sq km	n/a	188 m.	n/a	Republic	unlisted
French Polynesia	280, 000	\$3.448 b.	High Inc.	3, 660 sq km	n/a	7.15 [2012]	n/a	Parliament	unlisted
New Caledonia	263, 000	\$2.682 b.	High Inc.	18, 575 sq km	n/a	11.1	n/a	Parl. Rep	unlisted

**References**

OECD

World Bank

CIA

UN

SIPRI

### 4.1.3. Information about the Ranking Table

#### Table 1 & Table 2

This table shows defined perimeters to assist in exploring the question 'is hegemony possible in the South Pacific'. There are some information that are not easily available in some of the countries and attempts made to find the closest figures. Some countries chosen may not be a member of the OECD countries.

Aid has been used as the primary reference in effort to establish a premise for identifying which internal or external state may be the hegemon in the region. The US and China which featured throughout this paper both did not get to be the top donor states based on OECD Aid to the South Pacific Region. Australia and New Zealand has been added as part of the donor countries even though both are geographically part of the SPR. The ranking table has identified that Australia ranks as the top donor in the region while China ranks second. Could Australia be the hegemon in the region?

#### Explanation of Parameters

Donor States & South Pacific Region (SPR).

Details list of Donor States in SPR were selected based on these factors;

- Influence
- Interests
- Level of Aid & Development
- Diplomacy
- Economic & Trade
- Security & Defense – includes Military, Naval  
Actual boundaries
- ✓ Population
- ✓ GDP based on [Actual] GDP per capita, PPP (current international \$)
- ✓ AID
- ✓ Geography – Landmass
- ✓ Security/Defense-Military Spending
- ✓ Economy – expressed in GDP US dollars of Purchasing Power Parity to ascertain relative gain of different currencies.
- ✓ Technology- Nuclear Energy
- ✓ Regime Type
- ✓ Diplomatic relations

## Table 2

As a point of interest, I have included the recipient states in the SPR and which covers small island states in the three sub-region; Melanesia, Polynesia, Micronesia. 14 of these states have signed diplomatic agreement with China. Again efforts have been made to fill in the columns as best as it could be.

The two tables; Table 1 and Table 2 clearly distinguishes the external powers or donors to SPR Aid recipients. Other factors such as populations and Defense/Military spending are also interesting benchmark.

## 5.0 Conclusion

To construct a sound narrative of the South Pacific Region and determine if hegemony is possible I have inferred that neither the US nor China can be the hegemon in the region at this point in time. It is possible to have a hegemon in the region and this may be feasible to ascertain in the near future. Drawing on the meaning of the word 'hegemony' or "hegemonia or Ἡγεμῶν, [or] hegemon" from Homer's version in Iliad and noted in Wilkinson (2008, p. 120), to be a hegemon literally means 'supreme' or supremacy'. However, the concept of hegemony has varied over time and so have its interpretations. From the international relations perspectives, as Mosher (n.d) affirmed, it means "a single pole or axis or power" and it points toward a leading state or predominantly, the biggest influence of one state over other states.

Whilst Ratuva (2014, p. 418) had affirmed that both the US and China are "hegemonic states" in the Pacific, the outcome of the ranking analysis designed for this paper

reveals a different outcome for the SPR. A clear distinction of the Pacific as a large region, within which sits the SPR needs to be made clear from the outset to avoid confusion. Undoubtedly, US and China are key players in the region. This is evident from development programs and diplomatic ties they each have with SPR. There is an evolving geopolitical power play in the SPR, which Ratuva indicated, “may have pushed the precincts noted in “Hau’ofa’s ‘our seas’ as the two hegemonic states, the United States and China, stake their claims as Pacific powers”, (Ratuva, 2014, p. 418). This is creating a complex situation in the region as the various layers of rivalry and interactions are occurring today.

The SPR is an oceanic region which has number of island sovereign states within the sub-region and includes Australia and New Zealand. The geopolitical nature of the region in the contemporary sense presents a different architecture when compared to the larger picture of the Pacific theatre or American Lake in the 20<sup>th</sup> to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The evolving nature of regional and global politics has impacted a great deal on the development and changes occurring in the region. This means small sovereign island states, small actors, as they may be are adding to the complexities of power play as each aligns and has diplomatic relations with big powers of its choice. China has signed diplomatic ties with fourteen island states which is a first in the region. This option was never available during the era of the American Lake when US was called the hegemon in the Pacific with the SPR factored in to this picture. Alternatively, US has extended its Security and Defense arrangement with Australia by setting up outposts in specific areas. It has signed Security agreements with New Zealand. China’s emergence and deepening involvement resulting from the signing of diplomatic ties with fourteen island states re-ignited the interests of the traditional



Western Powers. The situation has presented itself as a complex one with multi-level dimensions and signals the shifting dynamics of powers within the region.

Based on the table ranking, using Aid as the primary parameters, US is ranked as fourth while China rank as number two on the donor country table for the SPR. It is Australia that gives the most Aid in the region and followed by China. Australia's position is quite strong, considering it is the top donor state in Aid within the region and possesses defense/security and material capability aided by the US. It has the largest population and landmass. However, it falls short of being the hegemon. A hegemonic power brings with it stability in the region and possess unequivocal hierarchy of power and an unchallenged dominant or hegemonic power", (Gilpin, 1988, p. 592). Gilpin asserts, that a challenge to this stability can trigger bigger problems between the two states. According to Gilpin, this creates instability or an "unstable system" which relates to "economic, technological, and other changes" that erode "the international hierarchy" thus challenging "the position of the hegemonic state", (Gilpin, 1988, p. 592).

The geo-political nature in SPR continues to evolve as the dynamic of actors continue to interact at all levels. Most importantly, the cooperation and collaboration of these actors at the highest level of governance in the region are crucial for the superordinate power to become a hegemon. The two tables; 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 used indicates '*Donor Countries Providing Aid to South Pacific Countries*', and features '*Recipient Pacific Island sovereign states*'. The four states; Australia, China, New Zealand, United States are identified as top donors in the region. This means they each contribute significantly in various ways towards development in the region be it aid, security and economically.

Australia, unlike China, which has signed diplomatic ties with fourteen of the Pacific Island states. There is no record of the US signing agreement with the fourteen island states. US, however, still ranks as the top in material wealth and Security/Defense capabilities and is already a hegemon in East Asia as Goh indicated.

It is evident that China views the US as superordinate power however, this does not deter China from continuing to seek strong economic ties with states in the SPR despite its ongoing diplomatic competition with Taiwan. It will be interesting to gauge, if these small island states opt for China when casting their United Nation votes. The US has enjoyed the hegemon status in the Asia region, which China appears poised to offset. However, Asian scholars such as Yang and Yu and Goh do acknowledge that whilst China is rising in its economic growth and its plan to advance its blue water maritime naval strategy, it is still a long way off. Yang indicated, the claim that “China is on its way to replace the West led by the US and to dominate the South Pacific is flawed”, (Yang, 2009, p. 154).

On a final note, it is crucial to mention for the small island sovereign states in the SPR, the influences and interests by external states, some which are non-traditional have meant newer opportunities, as the case with China. This was not the case during the American Lake era when the US was the dominant state and hegemon in the South Pacific Region. This is now shifting. The modern day perspectives of hegemon has also evolved over time. This can be noted in Goh’s analysis on the social component of hegemony which also resonates with Marsella’s theory of the social and cultural aspect. Australia and NZ, as donor countries and part of SPR enjoy a different status when compared to the small island states in the same region, which are recipients and dependent on Aid. It is no doubt, that the choices are with the smaller island states,

as to which superordinate powers and/or other powers, it wishes to align with. In return, these powers get to influence and implement changes which ultimately impact the smaller states' national policies and structures. Deeper interactions and involvement in the SPR at several layers are crucial. Powers that have material capabilities, does add to the security in the region, however, this factor appears to have shifted, as the focus in defining hegemon has now embraced a much wider context.

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