

# Repulsion as the Antithesis of Attraction in Soft Power Studies

– How Australia's climate change response has elicited a  
feeling of repulsion in the Pacific islands

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## Abstract

The ultimate aim of this thesis is to contribute to the development of the concept of repulsion in soft power studies. This is achieved through the operational aim, which is to understand the concept of repulsion by exploring how a feeling of repulsion can be engendered in a state or region by the actions or inactions of the agent. As the antithesis of attraction, I argue that repulsion can be elicited in the subject (state or region) through the culture, values or policies of the agent. Australia's much maligned climate change response and how it has been received in the Pacific islands was selected as a case study. It was concluded through the application of a repulsion framework that Australia's response to climate change has likely elicited a feeling of repulsion in the Pacific islands. Through the development of a bespoke repulsion framework, in conjunction with an appropriate methodology that supports the identification of repulsion engendered in a subject by an agent, this study contributes to the advancement of repulsion as a cogent concept in soft power studies.

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## List of Abbreviations

Australian Broadcasting Corporation	ABC
Chinese Communist Party	CCP
Carbon Pricing Mechanism	CPM
Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation	CSIRO
Group of Twenty	G20
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change	IPCC
North Atlantic Treaty Organization	NATO
Non-Governmental Organisation	NGO
Pacific Islands Forum	PIF
Pacific Small Island Developing States	PSIDS
United Nations	UN

## Introduction

Repulsion is a largely unexplored concept in International Relations, as most of the attention concerning soft power has been focused on how a state can make itself seem attractive to others and subsequently how this translates into desirable outcomes for said state. This thesis will take a slightly different approach to the study of soft power by focusing on why certain actions or inactions by the agent may be considered by the subject as repulsive. As there may be many actions and inactions that can be assumed to be repulsive, this thesis will focus on the issue of climate change and the responses of developed nations. Due to the growing international concern regarding environmental issues, it will be argued that the climate change responses of states have become intertwined with their international appeal making it a source of attraction and therefore an element of soft power. Climate change responses prove to be a pertinent issue to explore because of the increased urgency from the international community in recent decades to drastically reduce the world's carbon emissions. This increased urgency has translated into a feeling of desperation in some instances and this is evident in the discourse of current and former state leaders, international organisations, NGO's and other non-state actors. The discourse also exhibits a sense of cosmopolitanism, meaning that states – especially developed states – are expected to display a sense of moral duty to those beyond their own borders, specifically to those states that are at the forefront of the ongoing and worsening effects of climate change. Thus, from the outset, it is easy to understand why inadequate climate change responses, especially on the part of developed Western nations, may engender a feeling of repulsion in states or regions that are at risk of losing their homes, and in some instances their lives and livelihoods, from the worsening effects of climate change.

## Problem Formulation

The concept of repulsion as the antithesis of attraction is mentioned only in passing by a handful of prominent soft power scholars. Other than that, it has received very little substantive interest. I believe there to be great value in understanding what generates repulsion because if attraction can lead to desirable outcomes for an agent of soft power, then repulsion can be assumed to lead to undesirable outcomes for an agent. Thus, it will be argued, just as repulsion is the antithesis of attraction by sheer definition, so too can it be applied to the dynamics of soft power relationships between nation states.

In the literature pertaining to soft power there is a strong emphasis on how an actor can make themselves seem more attractive through their values, culture or policies. Not evident in the literature

though, is how an actor can avoid their values, culture or policies generating a feeling of repulsion. In the hands of experienced policy makers and diplomats, this information may prove to be highly useful.

The study of whether climate change responses can elicit a feeling of repulsion will be explored through the case study of Australia's relations with the Pacific islands. This proves to be an appropriate case study to pursue because firstly, Australia and the Pacific islands share a close geographical and diplomatic relationship, and the former also exercises significant soft power presence with the latter. Secondly, Canberra's response to climate change has been described as inaction rather than action (Holmes & Star 2018, pg.153) and therefore can be deemed to be an inadequate response. Thirdly, the Pacific islands are increasingly vulnerable to the ongoing effects of climate change and are at risk of losing their land and livelihoods to rising sea levels, together with the increasing frequency of natural disasters (Fry 2019, pg.281). By reaching a conclusion on whether climate change responses can elicit a feeling of repulsion, a greater comprehension of repulsion can be achieved.

## Potential Contributions

The exploration and subsequent further conceptualization of repulsion within soft power studies can assist policy makers in highlighting certain cultural practices, policies or values that may contribute to a negative attraction vis-à-vis another social actor. This negative attraction, which from here on will be referred to as repulsion, can be assumed to generate undesirable outcomes for the agent. Therefore, through the development of a bespoke repulsion framework, the identification of repulsion engendered in the subject by the agent can be applied to other pertinent issues, or areas of concern in bilateral or multilateral relations.

## Research Aim

The operational aim of this thesis will be to determine whether climate change responses can engender a feeling of repulsion in a state or region. More specifically, it will be to discover whether the climate change responses of developed Western agents are a source of repulsion from the perspective of climate vulnerable, developing states or regions. This will be achieved by conducting a case study of Australia's relations with the Pacific islands. The operational aim will be achieved by acquiring representations of Australia through a discourse analysis of Pacific island leaders made available in secondary sources from 2010 to 2020. The discourse analysis will function as an instrument to extract a refined material in which certain representations of Australia will become manifest. The representations will then be subject to the application of a newly developed repulsion framework that will assist in determining whether Australia's climate response elicits a feeling of repulsion in the Pacific islands.

The ultimate aim of this thesis is to contribute to knowledge production concerning the concept of repulsion within soft power studies. The pursuit of the operational aim will contribute to achieving this.

## Research Questions

1. What representations of Australia have been discursively constructed by the Pacific islands concerning the former's climate change response?
2. Consequently, are these representations evidence of a feeling of repulsion? If so, how?
3. How do climate change responses engender a feeling of repulsion?

## Motivation

I must be explicit in stating that the motivation in pursuing this specific case study is that, as an Australian citizen, I have been witness to Canberra's unwillingness and intransigence to legislate any kind of climate policy, let alone a climate policy that reflects the seriousness climate change poses to not only Australia, but also to its Pacific neighbours. My interest in researching the attitudes of the Pacific islands stems from a view that Australia conducts its relations with the Pacific islands with a sense of arrogance and it fails to exhibit any substantive commitment to the needs of those beyond its own borders in either its interactions or its foreign policy, in the context of climate change. In a world that, despite increases in the rise of nationalism, is still so interconnected and interdependent, Australia's climate change response has adopted self-interest above all other considerations and I am interested to understand the impact this is having on Australia's international reputation, and more specifically, its reputation and standing with Pacific island nations.

## Scope

Australia has great soft power capabilities, but this analysis is limited to issues expressly pertaining to the state-to-region relationship between Australia and the Pacific islands. This is because of the claim that what is attractive to one actor may not be attractive to the other, so to generalise Australia's soft power instead of its soft power in relation to the Pacific islands would not be reliable and therefore, would be remiss of me to take this approach. This is made evident by Ji who states that 'the effectiveness of soft power is influenced by the relationship pattern between agents and subjects' (2017, pg.82). This infers that soft power is variable, as the agent has different relationship patterns that are contingent upon who the subject of soft power is.

The objective of my research is to identify representations of Australia that are discursively constructed by the Pacific islands over a period of 10 years in an attempt to understand if repulsion



has been elicited in the Pacific islands (the subject). The study does not extend to identify if these representations produce certain policy outcomes. This is because it is difficult to establish causation between attraction/repulsion and policy outcomes or non-outcomes (causation is a contested issue in soft power studies). This is supported by Nye, who conceived the term 'soft power' and who mentions that 'whether attraction in turn produces desired policy outcomes has to be judged in each particular case' (2008, pg.95). Although Nye argues that it is possible, he does imply the difficulty in doing so by mentioning that it can only be done on a case-to-case basis. Therefore, it is deemed appropriate to focus solely on the presence of repulsion.

## Literature Review

There is an abundant amount of literature concerning soft power. Since the concept became mainstream in the late twentieth century, it has been explored by scholars from all ontological persuasions. This literature review will begin by providing some conceptualisations of power that will be valuable in developing a starting point to which to further understand the concept of soft power. The latter will then be discussed from a rudimentary and subsequently a constructivist perspective. Finally, the concepts of attraction and repulsion will be explored, the former of which has a relatively large amount of literature when contrasted with the latter.

## Power

The concept of power is fiercely contested and debated because of its inherent ambiguity and Feklyunina claims that soft power has not become immune to this ambiguity either, and consequently the fierce debate that is associated with it (2016, pg.774). According to Nye, 'power is the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes you want' (2008, pg.94). This is a very simplified and practical interpretation of the concept of power, but it provides the reader with a basic understanding of how Nye conceptualizes power and accordingly, soft power.

The study of power in International Relations has traditionally focused on material resources as a source of power and as a result, it has disregarded other main forms of power, including 'speech acts, hegemonic discourses, dominant normative interpretations and identities, and moral authority' (Alder 2002, pg.106). Power in discourse is of interest in this thesis. It is described by Foucault as 'powerful participants controlling and constraining the contributions of non-powerful participants' (cited in Chitty 2017, pg.10). Furthermore, discursive ability is associated with power as it can force one meaning of the world onto others (Bially 1998 cited in Alder 2002, pg.106). This would ultimately change the preferred outcomes of the subject of power. Conceptualizing power with a discursive focus is consistent with a constructivist standpoint that stresses that, in addition to material power, discursive power also becomes crucial to understanding the international system (Hopf 1998, pg.177). Power from a constructivist perspective that has a discursive focus can be described as a 'relational phenomenon dependent on the specific encounter of people with their values and preferences in their historical context' (Guzzini 2013 cited in Feklyunina 2016, pg.776). This conception of power can be complemented by another, 'power is the sustainability of the complex actor's interests being served in a continuous longitudinal and horizontal action/reaction chain networks through a complex social system over a defined period' (Chitty 2017, pg.11). These interpretations of power acknowledge

certain constructivist assumptions, namely that interests are endogenous to social interaction and that social structures exist alongside material structures.

A constructivist account of soft power will be interpreted through the abovementioned framework of power.

## Soft Power

Although Joseph Nye considered himself a rationalist and conceived the concept of soft power around the presuppositions of rationalism, soft power can be effectively and appropriately understood through a constructivist interpretation. Soft power 'was created as a concept of practice to describe the future of American non-material power in the aftermath of the Cold War' (Sevin 2017, pg.69). The concept is embedded deep within American foreign policy, but this thesis intends to move away from this America-focused conception of soft power and contribute to understanding it within a more global context. Nye asserts that soft power is a form of power and reaffirms its importance by expressing (in an American context) how failing to incorporate soft power into a country's national strategy would be a mistake (2004 cited in Rana 2017, pg.381). Nye continues and claims that 'governments sometimes find it difficult to control and employ soft power, but that does not diminish its importance' (2008 cited in Rana 2017, pg.381).

One of Nye's most recent definitions of soft power is that it is 'the ability to affect others through the co-optive means of framing agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction to obtain preferred outcomes' (Nye 2011, pp.20-21). This definition is consistent with Nye's understanding of power. According to Nye, the soft power of a country is concentrated within three resources: its culture, political values and foreign policies (2008, pg.96).

For these three resources to be effective in engendering soft power they have to appeal and resonate with the subject – what is attractive to one state may not be attractive to another. 'Whether something is attractive or not depends on an individual's cognitive and affective units such as values, beliefs and affective responses and so on' (Ji 2017, pg.82). This idea can be further explained through the idea of shared meaning. 'Societies construct and attach meanings and values to the material world around us. They do so through the construction of discourses' (Dunn & Neumann 2017, ch.1 pg.2). When countries attach similar meanings and values to the material world around them it can be termed as shared meaning. The concept can be applied to attraction and repulsion – the subject of soft power will only be attracted to another country's culture, political values or foreign policies if there is a convergence on meanings and values between the sender and the receiver of soft power. This concept will be further explored in relation to the idea of collective identity in the next section.

Soft power, as previously mentioned, is not without its critics. Firstly, some critics consider the concept to be similar to that of 'charisma (Weber 2004), cultural imperialism (1993) . . . and therefore is superfluous if not annoyingly farraginous' (Chitty 2017, pg.1). Secondly, Chitty argues that the concept of soft power is theoretically under-developed, causing misconceptions or alternative interpretations of the concept (2017, pg.1). I do not subscribe to the critique that the concept is unnecessary, but I do acknowledge that theoretically speaking, the concept is ambiguous and therefore presents certain difficulties when attempting to comprehensively conceptualize it.

Some contemporary debates pertaining to soft power is to what degree the focus should be on the subject or the agent. Vuving uses the term 'client' as it accounts 'for the fact that subjects of soft power are willing parties in the relations of power' (2009 cited in Gillespie & McAvoy 2017, pg.205). This contrasts with Bially Mattern who labelled the subjects of soft power as 'victims' (2007 cited in Gillespie & McAvoy 2017, pg.205). This thesis will refer to the subject of soft power as the 'client'. By using this term the thesis is remaining consistent with a relational understanding of soft power and acknowledging the client's role in the soft power relationship (Nye 2007 cited in Gillespie & McAvoy 2017, pg.207). It is the client that interprets the actions of the agent's soft power and therefore it is important to not just have an 'agent' focused perspective of soft power.

### Soft Power and Constructivism

Soft power is obviously a contested term as it has incited much debate both in academia and politics (Feklyunina 2016, pg.774). It therefore becomes important that the term is conceptualized in a manner that avoids too much ambiguity and confusion, although this is inevitable considering the disputed nature of the concept and its theoretical under-development. The interpretation of the concept is different depending on the ontological standpoint one has of power. From a constructivist position, it is difficult to determine the soft power capabilities of a state by just studying it as a property of the state. It becomes more appropriate to 'conceptualize soft power as a relationship between two or more actors' (Feklyunina 2016, pg.775). This assumption rejects the view that soft power (and power in general) should only be considered as a property of the agent (2016, pg.776). This essentially means that the soft power capabilities of a state are situational and depends on the dynamics of its relationship with the client as well as the constructed identities of both the agent and the subject. For example, the United States consistently exercises soft power with Australia but lacks the same level of soft power with Iran, and this is because the United States has a very different relationship with Iran than it does with Australia. This can be explained by a collective identity and consequently, the shared meanings that are attached to subjects and objects in the material world in which they are found.

Constructivism and soft power are ontologically compatible. This is made evident by Naren Chitty who states that 'constructivism, after all, focuses on norms, identity, and culture and is a natural habitat for soft power even if the latter concept was launched from within neoliberalism' (2017, pg.16). Nye himself has written that 'attraction and persuasion are socially constructed' (2011 cited in Ji 2017, pg.83), acknowledging the intersubjective characteristics of soft power. Soft power can therefore, be conceptualized as 'the ability to create consensus around shared meanings' (Roselle et al. 2014 cited in Feklyunina 2016, pg.776).

An agent's identity can be manifest in all three of Nye's soft power resources – culture, political values and foreign policy. Social constructivism uses the concept of collective identity to explain soft power and how it is received by the subject (Feklyunina 2016, pg.774). Collective identity is used to 'construct a shared understanding of common interests' (2016, pg.777). Feklyunina states that this does not mean that a common identity needs to be shared but that actors may instead 'share certain key elements in their constructed identities' (2016, pg.777). If collective identities are evident in a relationship between actors, then the client will more often than not determine their interests to be consistent with that of the agent of soft power (2016, pg.778). Hence, collective identity is an important concept in understanding the soft power relations (including repulsion) between the agent and the client.

## Attraction

Nye claims that soft power works by shaping the interests and preferences of audiences through attraction, which implies to a degree that interests are assumed to be fluid and endogenous to social interaction, and not pre-determined as rational thought presupposes. The term 'attraction' can have different social meanings for different social actors and therefore, what is attractive to one social actor may be different to what is attractive to another. This has already been made evident by Ji who indicates that attraction is dependent on an actor's cognitive and affective units (Ji 2017, pg.82), which in turn is representative of the actor's identity. Identity plays an important role in attraction and this is made evident by the constructivist assumption that 'identities inform interests and, in turn, actions' (Rues-Smit 2013, pg.224). Attraction occurs when actors share certain key elements in their constructed identities and consequently, their interests. This idea is supported by Reich and Lebow who state that for an actor to persuade another to cooperate, or in this case for one actor to be attracted to another, a shared identity must be apparent (2014 cited in Feklyunina 2016, pg.777).

This idea is further elaborated upon by Feklyunina, who suggests that if the assumption that interests are not pre-determined holds true, then the client of the agent's soft power is going to be more inclined to interpret their interests as likeminded with the agent if 'there is a degree of compatibility

between their socially constructed identities' (2016, pg.777). Essentially, for the client to be attracted to the culture, political values or foreign policy of the agent of soft power, a shared or collective identity must be apparent.

How attraction is generated is explored by Alexander Vuving in 'How Soft Power Works' (2009). He first conceptualizes soft power as 'the ability to get others to want, or accept, what you want' (2009, pg.5). Vuving begins by discussing the issue of power being perceived solely as a resource and addresses this issue by creating a distinction between power resources and power currencies. The latter can be considered as characteristics that cause power and are 'usually properties of resources or activities' (2009, pg.5). Activities in this context can be regarded as actions leading to specific outcomes. Vuving contends that attraction is generated through three power currencies that he terms as 'beauty, brilliance, and benignity' (2009, pg.7). These three terms will be explored because by understanding what generates attraction, a framework of what generates repulsion can be developed. Vuving's three power currencies provide a comprehensive, yet simplified way of understanding how attraction is generated between actors while concurrently providing a framework to facilitate the development of repulsion.

The power currencies are contingent on the audience (the client) and certain criteria need to be satisfied in order to make them effective. Specifically, it is a shared meaning of these power currencies that needs to be realised, and that is dependent upon a collective identity. This is, in part, explained by the idea that attraction is 'an interpretation that won out over many other possible interpretations through communicative process' (Mattern 2005 cited in Feklyunina 2016, pg.776). It is the client of soft power that interprets attraction and therefore interprets whether the agent's actions display elements of brilliance, benignity or beauty, and again this can only be realised through a collective identity. As the saying goes, 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder', and this can be expanded to include benignity and brilliance.

Beginning with brilliance, Vuving describes this power currency as 'the property of someone or something that is capable or successful' (2009, pg.9). Being capable and in turn successful is attractive as it 'generates admiration . . . imitation, or emulation, and respect, or fear, or reverence' (2009, pg.10). Vuving suggests that brilliance is often displayed by countries that are, among other things, peaceful, have advanced scientific and technology sectors, vibrant economies, and a rich culture (2009, pg.9). This is all reliant, however, on shared meaning that is achieved through collective identity. Rotham expresses a similar idea to Vuving's 'beauty' - for an actor to consider a certain cultural practice, idea, or policy attractive it must be coupled with success (Rotham 2011, pg.56). In addition, it should align with the interests (or perceived interests) of the client, as attraction implies a

desire to replicate. Rotham suggests that 'states will pursue policies they believe are successful for their goals and if those policies are successful, the policy will become attractive to others seeking similar goals and most likely adopted by them' (2011, pg.59). Seeking similar goals implies a shared interest derived from a collective identity but if this collective identity does not exist, then interests diverge. For example, Australia may consider itself to have a vibrant economy but that may not be interpreted as brilliant by the Pacific islands if the latter associates a vibrant economy with mass production and consumption that is linked to carbon emissions and the subsequent degradation of the environment. A shared meaning in this example would require the Pacific islands to interpret a vibrant economy to mean a prosperous society (as Australia probably would), but because the agent and the client may not share a collective identity in this context, the meanings of a 'vibrant economy' will not align, and their interests may diverge as a result.

Beauty is achieved through 'shared ideals, values, causes, or visions' (Vuving 2009, pg.11). Actors discover the beauty of another actor when they are pursuing these shared virtues together (2009, pg.11). Just like brilliance, the power currency of beauty is very much dependent on the concept of a collective identity as the pursuit of shared ideals, virtues and causes require a shared meaning to be apparent between the agent and the client. Beauty can manifest itself in all three of Nye's soft power resources: culture, political values and foreign policy.

Benignity is an 'aspect of the agent's relations with others, especially with the client of soft power' (Vuving 2009, pg.8). It revolves around the idea of how an actor treats people or other actors (2009, pg.8). It can become manifest in various ways, but selfless behaviour and putting other actor's interests before your own is what Vuving suggests to be the most common (2009, pg.9). Although a collective identity is still important, benignity can be said to be less dependent on it to generate attraction. This is because the term 'benignity' can be interpreted as being less subjective than the power currencies of beauty and brilliance. Benignity seems to be the absence of aggression, or hard power, by the agent towards the client. The use of hard power unnecessarily will almost always affect the attractiveness of the agent in the eyes of the client.

## Repulsion

There is a lot of literature concerning what successfully generates soft power but not much on what generates repulsion. It can be assumed that in instances where countries fail to increase or maintain their soft power, a feeling repulsion can become manifest. As far as I am aware, the antithesis of attraction – repulsion – has not garnered much attention in International Relations. The concept of repulsion is necessary to explore because although causation is hard to directly link between soft power and desirable outcomes, it does exist, and this is the same case for repulsion. If the client is

repulsed by the political values, foreign policy, or culture of the agent it will, either directly or indirectly, have an effect on the relations between the two and in turn, an effect on the policy preferences of the client state. It then becomes necessary, in my opinion, to further understand the concept of repulsion for the benefit of both the academic field of International Relations and for that of policy makers.

To understand repulsion, it is essential to first comprehensively understand soft power and the idea of attraction, and this has been achieved in the previous section. Nye first introduced the idea of repulsion as the antithesis of soft power (attraction) in 'Public Diplomacy and Soft Power' (2008):

'But if the content of a country's culture, values, and policies are not attractive, public diplomacy that 'broadcasts' them cannot produce soft power. It may produce just the opposite. Exporting Hollywood films full of nudity and violence to conservative Muslim countries may produce *repulsion* rather than soft power' (Nye 2008, pg.96).

The term repulsion is mentioned by other scholars in passing also (Chitty 2017, pg.32; Louw 2017, pg.305) and is described as the direct opposite of attraction in the context of soft power. Repulsion in its simplest form is 'a feeling of strong distaste' (Knight 2007, pg.731). How it is generated will be studied through Alexander Vuving's framework of attraction.

Soft power can provoke a change of behaviour in the client state and hence it becomes important to note that soft power and more specifically, attraction, is not the only trigger of change in a client's behaviour or attitudes. This is made apparent by Rotham who states that 'failure in culture or policy produces a negative attraction toward those policies and cultures' (2011, pg.57). The concept of negative attraction is consistent with what Nye refers to as repulsion and it can also be a source of change in the client's behaviour and therefore, it can be assumed its policy preferences also. Nye introduced the concept of repulsion, albeit briefly, when discussing the effects of publicly broadcasting aspects of a country's culture, policy or values that are not attractive to the client. The concept of repulsion can be expanded beyond what can be interpreted as the voluntary public broadcasting of a state's culture, policy, or values to include the involuntary broadcasting of state's culture, policy, or values. Involuntary broadcasting is self-explanatory; it can be described as the uncontrolled or unwanted publicity of an agent's culture, policy, or values beyond its own state borders. In the case of this thesis, the intention is to investigate if and how the involuntary broadcasting of developed states' (the agent) climate change responses engender a feeling of repulsion in states or regions (the client) who are vulnerable to the effects of climate change.



If repulsion is the antithesis of attraction and the latter is assumed to increase the agent's 'ability to get others to want, or accept, what you want' (Vuving 2009, pg.5), then repulsion can not only be assumed to limit the agent's ability to get others to want, or accept what it wants, but the unintentional instigation of the client to pursue outcomes that contradict what the agent wants because of an action or inaction by the latter.

This can be triggered by an absence of a collective identity and would mean the culture, political values or policies of the agent would engender a feeling of repulsion in the client. The absence of a collective identity does not generate repulsion on its own, but it can be expected 'that a rejection of such an identity or seeing the other as not belonging to [y]our community will make it significantly more difficult for an international actor to promote their interpretation of a particular issue' (Feklyunina 2016, pg.777). Thus, the lack of a collective identity can be considered as a precondition to repulsion because disparate identities cause a difference in the interpretation of issues, or weight given to certain values that then becomes manifest in the policy, culture and political values of both the agent and the client. It is important to note that although Nye clearly argues that soft power and attraction are identified through culture, foreign policy and political values, this thesis will use policy instead of foreign policy. This is because the domestic policy of the agent can also have ramifications beyond its borders and therefore, contribute to engendering a feeling of repulsion in the client.

The agent's culture, political values or policies may be considered repulsive by the client but that does not necessarily mean that it effects the attractiveness of other soft power resources. Chitty discusses this by suggesting that 'a country's policies may be detested in a second country while its cultural exports may be found to be delectable' (Chitty 2017, pg.25). The agent's foreign policies can be repulsive to the subject, while at the same time its political values or cultural exports can seem attractive (Chitty 2017, pg.25). Put simply, 'deficits in one sector will not necessarily affect the soft power equity in another' (2017, pg.25). Australia proves to be a good example of this, and this will become apparent in the case study and subsequent discourse analysis.

Soft power is different to hard power in the sense that 'hard power refers to the changing of the incentive structures of actors whose interests are taken as given and soft power to the shaping of those very interests' (Lukes 2005 cited in Vuving 2009, pg.5). The presence of repulsion, in the context of power, limits the agent's ability to shape the client's interests and preferences to align with their own. Engendering a feeling of repulsion in the client may change the power balance between the agent and the client and this can become manifest in the foreign policies and actions of the client.

Alexander Vuving asks the question: 'what generates attraction?' (2009, pg. 8). My research will attempt to discover what generates repulsion by focusing on climate change responses as a source of

repulsion. It is not suggested that what generates repulsion is merely the opposite of what generates attraction, but it certainly is a good starting point in the development of the concept of repulsion. The concept will be explored through Vuving's power currencies (beauty, benignity, and brilliance). This will be achieved by understanding the inverse of the power currencies, essentially creating what can be referred to as power 'debts'. Repulsion is generated through power debts the same way attraction is generated through power currencies. This idea will be explored in greater detail in the following section.

The opposite of beauty has been described as 'opposite values and causes that provide a firm ground for regimes to see each other as ugly' (Vuving 2009, pg.10). The opposite of being benign, is 'harmfulness, aggressiveness, and egoism' (2009, pg.9). Brilliance is associated with being capable and successful, which can be displayed in the implementation of policy. Consequently, the opposite of brilliance can be interpreted as being unsuccessful and incompetent. Consistently failing to implement policies, even with the necessary policy tools at the agent's disposal, could be a relevant example of this. Repugnance, incompetence, and belligerence I argue, are the inverse of beauty, brilliance, and benignity. They will be referred to as power 'debts' that are interpreted by the client as characteristics of the agent that can generate a feeling of repulsion in the former. This is essentially the theoretical point of departure for my research.

This literature review has served two purposes. It has identified a gap in research pertaining to soft power and it has provided a foundation to develop a repulsion framework that will assist in interpreting the results of the discourse analysis, in addition to further understanding the idea of repulsion and consequently, soft power within the field of International Relations.

## Repulsion Framework

Contingent on the information provided in the previous chapter, a repulsion framework will be developed so to facilitate a reliable interpretation of the representations drawn from the discourse analysis. The framework will highlight actions or inactions that may be considered to generate a feeling of repulsion in the client towards the agent. The proposed framework is exactly that; a proposal - so undoubtedly there will be exceptions but based on what is known about what generates attraction, what generates repulsion can be considered as follows:

- Firstly, the absence of a collective identity is a prerequisite to producing a feeling repulsion in the client.
- Secondly, the client must interpret the agent's culture, political values or policies (both domestic and foreign) as one or more of the following: repugnant, incompetent or belligerent. It will be argued that when this occurs, it generates a feeling of repulsion in the client which can be identified in discourse. Subsequently, repulsion can then become manifest in the foreign policy of the client which may be in contradiction with the preferences of the agent. Although, this latter assumption will not be substantiated in this thesis.

There are certain indicators that signal an absence of a collective identity. The first being diverging interests between the agent and the client concerning a particular issue. As Feklyunina claims that collective identities are used to 'construct a shared understanding of common interests' (2016, pg.777), it can then be assumed that if interests are divergent on a particular issue, it is because a collective identity is not apparent between the agent and the client. The second indicator is that the client will not consider the agent to be part of their community. Community in this instance refers to a socially constructed group pertaining to a particular issue. It will be assumed that the client will usually only consider another agent to be part of their community if a similar interpretation or understanding is ascribed to the particular issue at hand.

Repugnance, incompetence, and belligerence are terms indirectly used by Vuving to describe the opposite of his 'three Bs'. To be viewed as repugnant by the client, the agent will consistently exhibit values that contradict or undermine the policies (either domestic or foreign) of the client. These undermining or contradictory values can become manifest in the policies of the agent or simply put, in the actions or inactions of the agent. Not all values that are unlike will be considered repugnant, as the client is more than capable of understanding that each state or social actor is inimitable, but the client will interpret the agent's values to be repugnant when political values or values exhibited in

policy are in direct competition with or is undermining their own. To be viewed as repugnant would also imply that the agent is acting in a selfish and self-interested manner, indeed acting in a selfish and self-interested manner can be determined to be a precondition of being considered repugnant.

Incompetence can be referred to as the inverse of brilliance, which is associated with the successful implementation of policy. Moreover, if the agent can exhibit the political values it promotes in its successful implementation of policy, this can also be considered as brilliance. In fact, it could be deemed a condition of brilliance. Vuving refers to brilliance as, 'if you have done your job successfully and I am doing a similar work, I will tend to learn from you and I will copy from you something that I think is at the roots of your success or capability' (Vuving 2009, pg.10). With all things considered, incompetence would infer that an agent has either failed in the implementation of a policy despite having the necessary policy tools and resources at its disposal, or the agent has succeeded in implementing a policy but has surrendered its political values to achieve its objectives.

In further reference to incompetence, 'once a policy becomes perceived as ineffective or unsuccessful in international politics, states would rather reject such a policy rendering the soft power resource obsolete' (Rotham 2011, pg.55). This would imply that the continuation of a policy that is considered to not only be unsuccessful or contradictory to the agent's own political values, but also in dissidence to international norms, would also be interpreted to be incompetent by the client. This may also be viewed as repugnant if the client subscribes to a specific international norm that the agent is directly challenging or undermining.

To be considered as belligerent by the client, the agent will display signs of egoism, aggression and harm. In reference to the inverse of belligerence, benignity, Vuving suggests that 'kind people attract because they are unlikely to hurt you and they are likely to take your interests seriously' (2009, pg.9). This implies that to be judged belligerent, the agent would act in a manner that makes the client believe that they are likely to hurt them and subsequently, that they do not take the interests of the client seriously. The scope for the term 'hurt' will be extended to include indirectly, as well as directly, causing harm to the client.

'The conduct of foreign policy through international institutions and organisations is another channel in which states signal benignity and beauty, and as a result, project soft power' (2009, pg.15). If this inverse is applied – the conduct of an agent through international organisations and institutions can elicit repugnance and belligerence which subsequently can result in the client feeling repulsed. This idea is relevant to the case study and will be explored in greater detail in the analysis and ensuing sections.

## Methodology

The methodology of this thesis will be qualitative, which can be associated with being constructivist and interpretivist, and the analysis will be consistent with these orientations. The most suitable method to utilise to answer the research questions and achieve the operational research aim is a discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is inherently anti-realist, rejecting the existence of an external reality (Bryman 2013, pg.529). This anti-realist claim is supported by Dunn and Neumann who recognise that discourse analysis denies that actors' interests are exogenous to social interaction and that actors are motivated by 'rational means-ends preferences' (2016, pg.14, ch.3). Therefore, it becomes justified for the analysis to be consistent with a constructivist ontology as it would not be plausible to adopt a realist or even a liberalist standpoint. This will mean that an 'emphasis is placed on the versions of reality propounded by members of the social setting being investigated and on the fashioning of that reality through their renditions of it' (Bryman 2013, pg.529). In the context of this analysis, it will involve understanding the social realities of the Pacific islands through interpreting how Australia is perceived by the former in social settings concerning climate change.

Epistemologically an interpretivist stance will be apparent as inevitably, conducting a discourse analysis will incorporate interpretation which in this case, involves interpreting the attitudes, perspectives and emotions of the Pacific islands. Interpretivism is an alternative to positivism and is 'predicated upon the view that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action' (Bryman 2013, pg.20). Put simply, I will be attempting to interpret the subjective meaning of the social actions (discourse) undertaken by the Pacific islands.

## Theoretical Considerations

As stated in the previous paragraphs, from an ontological standpoint this thesis will be consistent with a constructivist understanding of the international system, that is it 'depicts the social world as inter-subjectively and collectively meaningful structures and processes' (Alder 2002, pg.102). Furthermore, 'material resources only acquire meaning for human action through the structure of shared knowledge in which they are embedded' (Wendt 1995 cited in Alder 2002, pg.102). There are certain constructivist assumptions that will be important in guiding the research of this thesis. Firstly, 'normative or ideational structures are as important as material structures' (Reus-Smit 2013, pg.224). Secondly, 'identities are the basis of interests' (Wendt 1992 cited in Reus-Smit 2013, pg.225), implying that interests are endogenous to social interaction and not exogenous as rationalist theory supposes. And finally, 'agents and structures are mutually constituted' (Reus-Smit 2013, pg.225). This final

assumption in relation to soft power is important because it implies that both agents and structures (be they material, social or institutional) can have an effect on the other and hence the soft power capabilities of the state.

Constructivism is compatible with the epistemological approach of interpretivism as both are 'attuned to the unquantifiable nature of many social phenomena and the inherent subjectivity of all observations' (Reus-Smit 2013, pg.221). It is the stress constructivists place on identity that will be of most importance to this study. Realists and liberals disregard the importance of identity in shaping behaviour and outcomes, but constructivists do not. In addition, constructivists consider reality to be 'unknowable outside human perception' (Dunn and Neumann 2016, ch.1, pg.17), enforcing the notion that there is no external reality. The idea that 'actors are inherently social [and] that their identities and interests are socially constructed, the products of intersubjective social structures' (Reus-Smit 2013, pg.221), is especially compatible with interpretivism because of interpretivism's emphasis on grasping the subjective meaning of social behaviours and actions.

## Case Study Approach

My research will adopt a case study approach, focusing on the single analysis of Australia's soft power relations with the Pacific islands. It will act as an exemplifying case with the objective being 'to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday or commonplace situation' (Yin 2009 in Bryman 2012, pg.70). Analysing Australia's soft power relations as an exemplifying case proves to be an appropriate approach because the operational aim is seeking to understand the circumstances in which responses to climate change are deemed to be repulsive by another actor. By conducting a 'detailed and intensive analysis' (Bryman 2012, pg.66) of the chosen case, a comprehensive understanding can be achieved that outlines the conditions to which an agent's climate change response can be considered repulsive by the client. In addition, the case study will offer a starting point for the concept of repulsion to be further developed and explored in soft power studies.

## Deductive and Inductive Theory

My research will display elements of both deduction and induction. In reference to the former it will display deductive orientations because the point of departure is the theory of soft power that will inevitably be guiding my research (Bryman 2012, pg.19). But, as the discourse analysis proves, induction is also in execution as I am also attempting to 'draw generalisable inferences out of observations' (Bryman 2012, pg.26).

## Discourse Analysis

Discourse in its most basic, and arguably most uncontested form, is '(1) anything beyond the sentence, (2), language use, and (3), a broader range of social practice that includes non-linguistic and non-specific instances of language' (Schiffrin, Tannen & Hamilton 2015, pg.1). More definitively and more consistent with the ontological and epistemological considerations of this thesis though, discourse can refer to 'a broad conglomeration of linguistic and non-linguistic social practices and ideological assumptions that together construct or reinforce [certain notions or concepts]' (Schiffrin, Tannen & Hamilton 2015, pg.1). It 'confers meanings to social and physical realities' (Epstein 2008, pg.2). Furthermore, Epstein explains that discourse is an 'ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorisations about a specific object that frame that object in a certain way and, therefore, delimit the possibilities for action in relation to it' (2008, pg.2).

Dunn and Neumann claim that discourse analysis is the 'examination of how and why things appear the way they do, and how certain actions become possible' (2016, ch.1, pg.6). It emphasises the importance of language which can 'be regarded as a set of signs which are part of a system for generating subjects, objects, and worlds' (Dunn & Neumann 2016, ch.1, pg.3). Applying this to the case study, the intention is to examine the discourse of the Pacific islands made available in press material in an attempt to ascertain the attitudes, feelings and perspectives of the Pacific islands towards Australia. These attitudes, feelings and perspectives will discursively construct representations of Australia within the context of climate change. According to Dunn and Neumann, 'representations that are put forward time and again become a set of statements and practices through which certain language becomes institutionalised and normalised over time' (2016, ch.1, pg.7). I want to identify a representation, or a set of representations of Australia in the context of climate change that are manifest in Pacific island discourse, these representations I suspect, will consist of at least one that inhibits a feeling of repulsion towards Australia.

In relation to the concept of power, discourse analysis proves to be a valid method to interpret Australia's soft power capabilities with the Pacific islands. This is made evident by Dunn and Neumann who state that 'discourses are the product of power by which hegemonic interpretations are seemingly naturalized and internalized, but also resisted and contested' (2016, ch.1, pg.21). The most notable part of the previous statement is that hegemonic discourses can be resisted and contested. In the case of the Pacific islands' relations with Australia, it seems appropriate to consider that the former is resisting and fiercely contesting the latter's discourse (and therefore power) concerning the issue of climate change.

To further rationalise the choice to conduct a discourse analysis, I again refer to Dunn and Neumann who argue that 'analysis is primarily about mapping discursive structures/institutions to show how they produce objects and subjects [and] how power relations are embedded and produced within discourses' (2016, ch.2, pg.40). The objective of the discourse analysis is consistent with this, as I intend to ascertain representations of Australia embedded in Pacific island discourse that will ultimately allow for a reliable interpretation of Australia's soft power relations with the Pacific islands, and within the context of Australia's response to climate change.

Levels of attraction or repulsion will be interpreted through representations of Australia in Pacific island discourse, specifically relating to discourse that mentions climate change. The specific methods that will be utilised to discern these representations is affective stance, subject positioning and predicate analysis. Affective stance reflects 'the mood, attitude, feeling, and disposition, as well as degrees of emotional intensity, vis-à-vis some focus of concern' (Ochs 1996 cited in Strauss & Feiz 2013, pg.276). 'Indices of stance might include: words of disbelief, adverbial intensifiers, . . . adverbial attenuators, . . . superlatives, . . . [and] parts of words' (Strauss & Feiz 2013, pg.267). These are the specific indices that will be analysed in speech acts of Pacific island leaders published in press material. The Pacific islands, through discourse, enacts a collective mood, attitude, feeling or disposition vis-à-vis Australia's response to climate change, (or lack thereof) and affective stance will assist in understanding what emotions are being indexed by the Pacific islands.

Subject positioning refers to the 'relative relationships that are constructed between it and other subjects' (Dunn & Neumann 2016, ch.5, pg.16). 'Oftentimes these relationships are established through the construction of subject positioning based upon opposition or similarity' (2016, ch.5, pg.16). Essentially, 'subject positioning endows various kinds of subjects with particular attributes and place them in relations with other subjects or objects' (2016, ch.5, pg.16).

Furthermore, affective stance and subject positioning will be complemented with what Dunn and Neumann refer to as predicate analysis that examines 'the verbs, adverbs, and adjectives that are attached to nouns within specific texts' (2016, ch.5, pg.8). The use of predicate analysis proves to be justifiable as Milliken suggests that it is 'suitable for the study of language practices in texts (e.g. diplomatic documents, theory articles, transcripts of interviews)' (1999, pg.231). By extension, undertaking a predicate analysis of news articles that directly quote leaders and elected officials of the region under investigation also proves to be justifiable. 'Predicate analysis focuses on the language practices of predication – the verbs, adverbs and adjectives that attach to nouns' (Milliken 1999, pg.231). 'Predications of a noun construct the thing(s) named as a particular sort of thing, with particular features and capacities' (1999, pg.232). This is supported by Dunn and Neumann who state



that predicate analysis 'involves exposing how texts link certain qualities to particular subjects through the use of predicates and the adverbs and adjectives that modify them' (2016, ch.5, pg.12). Regarding the topic at hand, the application of predicate analysis in Pacific island discourse concerning Australia and its climate change response will allow for the identification of representations of the latter that have been discursively constructed. These constructions of Australia, evident in Pacific island discourse, will assist in identifying certain features and capacities of Australia that, through the application of the repulsion framework, will help determine whether a feeling of repulsion exists.

Milliken gives mention to the 'text's object space' (1999, pg.232). The object space is in reference to the idea that 'a text never constructs only one thing' (1999, pg.232). Thus, 'a set of predicate constructs defines a space of objects differentiated from, while being related to, one another' (1999, pg.232). In the analysis of this thesis, the focus will analyse only the predications that attach to the main subject (Australia), meaning that the object space is reduced to Australia's response to climate change and the texts being analysed can in fact construct more than one representation of Australia.

All three approaches will facilitate in identifying certain discourses over specific time periods which may signify a continuation, disappearance, or change in the representations, attributed to Australia's climate change response.

The discourse analysis will seek to focus on change within discourse concerning climate change, which can be likened to an elastic strategy (Dunn & Neumann 2016, ch.5 pg.2). Essentially, an elastic approach 'seeks to map the emergence or disappearance of signs, tropes, or metaphorical schema and trace any new relations that emerge' (Mutlu & Salter 2013 cited in Dunn & Neumann 2016, ch.5, pg.2). This analysis will seek to map the emergence of one or multiple representations of Australia and the disappearance of others, and this will be achieved through the use of subject positioning, predicate analysis and affective stance. Identifying soft power relations in discourse is a credible and reliable method to undertake and this is made evident by Chitty who indicates that soft power is everywhere in discourses (2017, pg.10).

## Sources

The analysis will focus on the discourse of leaders and elected officials of Pacific island countries, which is consistent with the approach Milliken proposes. Milliken states that 'a discourse analysis should be based upon a set of texts by different people presumed to be authorized speakers/writers of a dominant discourse' (1999, pg.233). It has proven difficult to obtain, in a systematic and reliable manner that is devoid of selection bias, primary sources such as speech acts and transcripts of leaders of Pacific island nations. I have had to rely on secondary sources and although this is obviously a

drawback to the analysis, the approach still proves to be valid. The secondary sources that will be analysed are news articles from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, and I have only analysed articles that directly quote leaders of Pacific island nations. The ABC proves to be a reliable source for accurate information. It is Australia's primary national broadcasting service and is publicly funded by the taxpayer (Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983). It operates in accordance with its Charter that is contained in section 6 of the ABC Act 1983 (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2020). The Charter ensures that 'the gathering of and presentation by the Corporation of news and information is accurate and impartial according to the recognized standards of objective journalism' (Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983, pg.9). Furthermore, it is 'statutorily independent of government and parliament, as well as private interests' (Chubb & Nash 2012, pg.37). In addition to ABC articles, any articles that were linked within an ABC article were also analysed, this included articles published by The Guardian which is also proven to be a reputable source of news and information.

I acquired the articles through the search engine Retriever by using the following terms:

"Pacific Islands Forum"

"Climate Change"

"Srcountry:AU" (denotes Australia as the source country)

I then used the taskbar on the left side to limit the search to ABC articles. The use of the search term 'climate change' is relatively self-explanatory as it limits the articles searched for to those concerned with the issue of climate change. The search term 'Pacific Islands Forum' was used because it is an annual event in which Australia and the Pacific islands take part in, in addition to New Zealand. In the lead up to this event, especially in recent years, there has been a lot of attention paid towards Australia in regard to its response to climate change. In recent years Australia's perceived climate change inaction has been highlighted by other PIF member states in the lead up to, during and directly after the annual event. Moreover, emotions tend to run high during this period and this is made evident by the rhetoric and passion of leaders that are subsequently reported in both print and digital media. For example, Tonga's Prime Minister Akilisi Pohiva, was reported to have cried in 2019 because of inadequate climate responses highlighted by climate activists (Clarke 2019a, para.21). It was also an effective search term to use because it limited the articles on climate change to issues and events pertaining to the Pacific islands and their perspectives of Australia.

The final search option 'srcountry:AU' guaranteed that all articles concerning climate change and the PIF were limited to Australian news outlets and further ensured that only articles that paid significant

attention to Australian and Pacific island relations within the context of climate change were identified.

My research analyses discourse from political leaders and elected officials across the Pacific island nations of Fiji (Frank Bainimarama), the Marshall Islands (Christopher Loeak and Tony De Brum), Samoa (Tuilaepa Sailele), Tuvalu (Enele Sopoaga), Kiribati (Anote Tong) and the Solomon Islands (Matthew Wale). These are the leaders who are the most outspoken about Australia's response to climate change as it is predominantly these leaders who have been quoted in ABC articles. Nonetheless, it proves appropriate and justifiable to regard the discourse from these countries as representative of the Pacific islands. In research performed by Dr Tess Newton Cain, James Cox and Dr Geir Henning Presterudstuen where they explored the perspectives of the Pacific islands by conducting interviews and focus groups in Fiji, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, the findings were 'inferred with confidence to apply more widely' (2020, pg.5). Signifying that the findings could be applied to the Pacific islands more generally.

Analysing the discourse of leaders of Pacific island nations also proves to be justifiable because as stated earlier, a discourse analysis should analyse authorised speakers of a dominant discourse (Milliken 1999, pg.223). The leaders of Pacific island nations not only have the power to create narratives and representations through discourse, but they are generally representative of their constituents. This idea may be contested but in the context of climate change, the political leaders of Pacific island countries are expressing the concerns and emotions that are apparent in the general population. This is made evident in the research carried out by the aforementioned authors of the general population in Solomon Islands, Fiji and Vanuatu. By undertaking qualitative interviews and coordinating focus groups, certain representations of Australia were made apparent that were consistent with the discourse of their political leaders. For example, when asked the question 'how do you feel about your country's current relationship with Australia?' (Newton Cain, Cox & Presterudstuen 2020, pg.23), the issue of climate change was discussed. Unprompted, participants from Fiji and Solomon Islands expressed their concerns about Australia's response to climate change and their desires for a greater commitment by the Australian Government (2020, pg.31).

A total of 48 articles were analysed, 8 of those between 2010 and 2014 and 40 between 2015 and 2020. The discrepancy between the number of articles in each time period indicates that the issue of Australia's climate change response became more prominent and more notorious after 2014. Of the 48 articles, 40 had direct quotes from Pacific island leaders that either directly or indirectly addressed Australia's response to climate change.

## Structure of Analysis

The analysis is split into two parts and this is considered an appropriate approach to identify the disappearance, emergence and naturalisation of specific representations made apparent in the discourse of the Pacific islands. The first part of the analysis will be from 2010 to 2014. In 2013 there was a change of government in Australia (conservative coalition enters government) but because it takes time – years in some cases – for discourse to become institutionalised, I considered it appropriate to extend the first part of the analysis to include 2014. This will allow the emergence and disappearance of discourses from 2015 onwards to be easily identifiable. This is made evident by Dunn and Neumann who suggest that discourse takes time to become normalised and institutionalised (Dunn & Neumann 2016, ch.1, pg.7). By analysing periods of time between four to six years, representations that have become normalised can be reliably identified. To identify certain representations, I am essentially ‘looking for a certain degree of regularity in a set of social relations’ (Dunn & Neumann 2016, ch.2, pg.8). Identifying representations that disappear, continue or emerge will assist in detecting whether a feeling of repulsion has become evident due to Canberra’s response to climate change.

## Limitations

Joseph Nye states that ‘whether a particular asset is an attractive soft power resource can be measured through polls or focus groups’ (2008, pg.95). This can be assumed to be the same for measuring whether certain cultural practices, policies or values are repulsive. My research is limited because of time and resource constraints which means that I cannot capture the feeling of repulsion of the Pacific islands through polls or focus groups. Instead, I must rely on interpreting speech acts from secondary resources. Moreover, relative to the Western world the number of news outlets in the Pacific islands are scarce and furthermore, the number of articles that are written in English and subsequently digitalised are even more scarce. It is for this reason that I find it necessary to analyse speech acts from secondary sources, namely news articles sourced from outside Pacific island nations. This enabled me to gather a larger quantity of material to analyse and subsequently, acquire more reliable and credible representations of Australia in Pacific island discourse.

## Case Study

Australia's relations with the Pacific islands serve as an appropriate case study to explore how climate change responses can be a source of repulsion in climate vulnerable states. This will be made evident in this chapter in which I will explain why Australia satisfies the criteria of a developed nation that has been criticised for its inadequate response to climate change. Australia's response has not only been considered inadequate by the Pacific islands, but by academics and politicians both within and outside of Australia. The chapter will then introduce the Pacific islands before explaining their response and interests pertaining to climate change, and why they demand urgent and substantive responses that rightfully acknowledge and sufficiently address the ongoing and worsening effects climate change poses to their ongoing sustainable existence. The chapter will finish by exploring Australia's relations with the Pacific islands over the past three decades, briefly highlighting to the audience the increasing tension caused by Australia's response to climate change.

## Selection Criteria

Climate change as an issue was chosen because it can be applied effectively to the repulsion framework. For instance, climate change is an issue that is interpreted differently by different actors depending on the actor's constructed identity. It is my view that climate change responses have the potential to elicit reactions in the subject that consider the agent to be repugnant, incompetent or belligerent.

The selection of Australia's relations with the Pacific islands as a case study to illustrate the relevance of the repulsion framework as well as how an agent engenders a feeling of repulsion in the client is appropriate because it satisfies certain selection criteria. Namely, that Australia as a developed Western nation, has been criticized both domestically and internationally for its response to climate change. In addition, the Pacific islands is region that is particularly vulnerable to the worsening effects of climate change.

## Climate Change

The issue of climate change is well-known around the world and any attempt to argue in dissidence of the science behind anthropogenic climate change is both irresponsible and immoral. Although the issue is well-documented, it is worth briefly explaining the issue that is the most dominant source of tension in the relations between Australia and the Pacific islands. 'Since the industrial revolution, human activities such as land clearing and the burning of oil and coal have increased the concentration of most greenhouse gases in the atmosphere' (Barnett 2005, pg.204). This has contributed to a

thickening of the greenhouse gases blanket that traps 'more of the outgoing infrared radiation, which warms the atmosphere, land and ocean surfaces' (2005, pg.204). Consequently, 'this warming creates a more vigorous redistribution of heat from the equator to the poles, leading to changes in atmospheric and oceanic circulations, weather patterns and the hydrological cycle that will continue' (2005, pg.204). These effects result in 'sea-level rise, changing precipitation patterns, increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, ocean acidification and coral bleaching . . . [which] have negative consequences for island societies' (Betzold 2014, pg.482).

## Australia's Climate Record

This section is merely a brief overview of Australia's response to climate change and a more detailed account can be found in reports by the IPCC, The Climate Council and the CSIRO. Australia's wavering commitment to reducing carbon emissions can be traced back to negotiations of the Kyoto Protocol, in which the agreement was weakened because of Australia's reservations and still, the Australian Parliament refused to ratify it (Holmes & Star 2018, pg.157). The 'Australia Clause' was introduced at the eleventh hour of the Kyoto Climate Change Conference and it effectively only applied to Australia (Hamilton & Vellen 1999, pg.145). The Australian Government was also successful in 'bargaining for the accounting rule that allowed carbon credits from the first commitment period to be carried over to the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol' (Maraseni & Reardon-Smith 2019, pg.438). Australia was depicted as a 'major obstacle to the agreement, exploiting the need for a consensus to hold out for preferential treatment' (Oberthür & Ott 1999 cited in Parry 2019, pg.560).

Australia makes up 0.3% of the global population yet produces 1.2% of global emissions and per capita, they are the largest emitter in the OECD (Swann 2019, pg.1). Additionally, Australia is 'one of the world's largest exporters of coal and gas and has sought to protect these industries' (Parry 2019, pg.559). Because of these exports Australia is considered to be the third largest potential polluter globally (Thornhill 2019).

Canberra's response to climate change to date, relative to other G20 nations, has been described as 'simply embarrassing' by Ursula Fuentes-Hutfilter, a senior policy advisor at not-for-profit, Climate Analytics (cited in Morton 2020, para.6). Australia's response can be attributed to what is termed as 'the media-fossil fuel industry-political elite roadblock' (Holmes & Star 2018, pg.166). Historically, the Australian Federal Government and the concentrated media industry apparent in Australia has served as a protectorate for the biggest carbon emitters, namely the mining and fossil-fuel industries (2018, pg.164). In the 1990's 'extractive industries got organised and exerted considerable influence on government' (Taylor 2014, pg.45). Coalition conservative governments in particular have enjoyed

heavy backing from the fossil-fuel industry, the coal industry especially (Lockwood 2014, pg.720). For this reason, among others, substantive climate change action has been near impossible to legislate.

In a survey of Australian politicians, conservatives were found to be less likely than politicians from Labor or Green parties to display beliefs concerning anthropogenic climate change that were consistent with scientific consensus (Fielding et al. 2012, pg.712). In Australia's political landscape, the Liberal Party and the National Party - who tend to work in coalition - can be seen to represent Australia's centre right and conservative constituents. Taking this into consideration, together with the fact that Australia in 19 of the past 25 years has been governed by a conservative coalition, it becomes apparent why they have failed to respond to climate change in the relatively urgent manner that other nations have.

In 2007 there was a substantive shift in Australia's climate policy due to a change in government (Parry 2019, pg.560). The Kyoto Protocol was ratified and a carbon price introduced (2019, pg.560). In 2012 the Carbon Pricing Mechanism was introduced to reduce emissions from electricity production but was abolished when the Labor Party lost the federal election in 2013 (Maraseni & Reardon-Smith 2019, pg.438). This abolishment of the CPM had a considerable effect on Australia's overall emissions (2019, pg.438).

While other developed nations have or are expected to commit to net zero emissions by 2050, there is still a debate in Australia about the credibility of the science behind anthropogenic climate change, which is made evident by a number of climate denialist politicians who have been elected to office in Australia. This has resulted in decades of climate inaction in Australia and the problem has become kryptonite for a sitting Prime Minister to address. Between 2010 and 2018, three democratically elected Prime Ministers lost their leadership positions when tabling climate and energy legislation which the parliament deemed too radical. The issue of climate change has become toxic in Australian politics, in no small part due to the influence of the right-wing media and the fossil-fuel industry working in tandem with one another for the vested interests. Bitter allegations and vitriolic hyperbole pertaining to climate change have become part of the everyday life in Australian politics and the mainstream media landscape.

## Critics

In 2009, Malcolm Turnbull - former Australian Prime Minister from 2015-2018, who at the time was the opposition leader for the Liberal Party - stated that in his own party there was 'a strong thread of climate change scepticism, even denial amongst Australia's centre right' (cited in Fielding et al. 2012, pg.716). In recent times Malcolm Turnbull together with his onetime political adversary, former Labor

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, have been damning in their critique of the Morrison government's continued stagnation on climate change. They wrote that Australia 'continues to bury its head in the sand, despite the fact that Australia remains dangerously at risk of the economic and environmental consequences that will come from the climate crisis' (Rudd & Turnbull 2021, para.4). Furthermore, they suggest that the current Prime Minister Scott Morrison's 'refusal to adopt both a firm timeline to reach net zero emissions and to increase its own interim 2030 target leaves us [Australia] effectively isolated in the western world' (2021, para.5).

Maraseni and Reardon-Smith, from the Institute of Life Sciences and the Environment at the University of Southern Queensland, suggest that the Australian government 'continues to undermine its commitment to mitigation and the integrity and credibility of its own emissions reductions policy' (2019, pg.438). Moreover, they state that Australia's strategy 'allows companies to upwardly adjust their calculated baselines on the basis of their highest expected emission, permitting emissions in excess of their historical emissions' (2019, pg.438). Maraseni and Reardon-Smith explain that such strategies only 'serve the short-term political and economic interests . . . [and] it is increasingly apparent that the cumulative impact of such tactics will ultimately impact the entire global community' (2019, pg.438).

Giorel Curran, from Griffith University, "summarises that Australia is a 'laggard' in climate change internationally" (2011 cited in Hughes & Urpelainen 2014, pg.60). And even in 2021, Australia continues to be singled out by the international community with the Biden Administration labelling Australia's current climate change policies as 'insufficient' (Knott 2021, para.1). What makes Australia's response to climate change all the more frustrating to international observers is that its 'climate and geography are very favourable for solar and wind power' (Parry 2019, pg.561). This is supported by the Biden administration who have stated that Australia has 'enormous potential . . . but that the country cannot rely solely on advancements in technology to achieve net zero emissions by 2050' (Knott 2021, para.2). This is in reference to Canberra's reluctance to introduce any sort of carbon tax as a significant number of Australian policy makers are convinced that it will be low emissions technologies that will unlock the solution to global warming (Taylor cited in Knott 2021, para.11). A solution that has been challenged by prominent leaders in science and industry (Climate Council 2020).

## The Pacific Islands

The Pacific islands, according to Schultz, can be defined geographically as 'the islands in the Pacific Ocean, excluding those in close proximity to a continental landmass or New Zealand, or lying to the south of New Zealand' (2012, pg.50). The Pacific islands is more than just 'an exercise in geographical



mapping' (Fry 2019, pg.1). It is now 'a name in a school textbook, a category in the social sciences, a department in the foreign ministries of larger states and an assumed category in global management by international agencies, the United Nations and international NGOs' (2019, pg.2). I find it necessary to use Fry's explanation because it encapsulates the idea that the Pacific islands are more than just a collection of island states, it is a region that is associated with having its own identity, political power, and the ability to operate as a diplomatic agent (Fry 2019, pg.2). The area is far from homogenous however, as 'not only is each Pacific island country different from other Pacific island countries . . . but Australia's relationship with one country is not the same as its relationship with other Pacific island countries' (Newton Cain & Morgan 2020, pg.1). By referring to the islands of the Pacific as the 'Pacific islands', I am not attempting to generalize the region as homogenous, I appreciate and acknowledge that the region is incredibly heterogeneous and diverse. However, referring to the Pacific islands as a collective in the context of climate change proves to be valid and this will be made evident in the following sections, where I will explain how the Pacific islands have discursively constructed a shared identity concerned with the ongoing effects of climate change.

### Vulnerability to Climate Change

The risks climate change poses to the Pacific islands have been known for quite some time. Since the 1988 Toronto Conference, 'small islands have repeatedly been identified in science and climate policy discourse as natural systems particularly vulnerable to climate change' (Barnett 2005, pg.203). In the Communique of the Twenty-Third South Pacific Forum, it was stated that 'global warming and sea-level rise are the most serious threats to the Pacific region and the survival of some island states' (1992 cited in Barnett, pg.203).

'The low atolls are particularly vulnerable . . . to rising sea levels associated with climate change' (Schultz 2012, pg.51). This is supported by Barnett who mentions that 'because most Pacific islands have a high ratio of coastline to land area, the potential impact of climate change in this zone is a critical issue for development planning' (2005, pg.207), and this is especially so for the atolls. Pacific islands nations that are comprised of atolls include Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Tokelau and Tuvalu (2005, pg.206). Essentially, Barnett argues that climate change will have damning effects on all aspects of Pacific island life, from food security to major Pacific island industries (2005). This assertion that climate change will affect every aspect of life in the Pacific islands is supported by Kiribati President Anote Tong, who is quoted as saying 'what we are talking about is survival, it's not about economic development . . . its not politics, its survival' (cited in Cochrane 2015a, para.5).

## Identity

Despite their vulnerability to climate change, Candice Steiner argues that the Pacific islands refuse to accept the identity of the victim (2015, pg.149). According to Steiner, some Pacific island people instead perceive themselves as 'sea warriors with the power to rise up against climate change' (2005, pg.149). This is consistent with an emerging narrative in the Pacific region – The Blue Pacific.

The Blue Pacific is a narrative that island state members of the Pacific Islands Forum have conceived, and it stresses 'the importance of the Pacific taking ownership of its future' (Tukuitonga 2018 cited in Newton Cain, Cox & Presterudstuen 2020, pg.8). It has developed into an initiative that emphasises 'the collective potential of the region's shared stewardship of the Pacific Ocean; recognizing our [its] shared ocean identity, ocean geography, and ocean resources' (Tukuitonga 2018, para.5). By shifting from the enduring and dominant 'narrative of small isolated and fragile states, to a large, connected and strategically important ocean continent' (Taylor cited in Newton Cain & Morgan 2020, pg.4) the Blue Pacific intends to capitalise politically from a strong, collective voice. The Blue Pacific identity has already helped to achieve, against the preferred outcome of Canberra, a consensus among PIF states that climate change is indeed the 'single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific and a reaffirmation by leaders of a commitment to progress the implementation of the Paris Agreement' (PIFS 2018 cited in Fry 2019, pg.301). An important note to make is that the Blue Pacific identity is very much ingrained within the PIF but does not include PIF members, Australia and New Zealand. The Blue Pacific has made it clear that although Australia and New Zealand's input are valued 'attempts to frustrate the pursuit of fundamental shared objectives of the Blue Pacific are no longer tolerated' (Fry 2019, pg.302). This is a clear indication that the Blue Pacific is wanting to control and change the discourse pertaining to these very pressing issues, specifically climate change.

The Blue Pacific identity is important in the context of understanding how the Pacific Islands region views Australia in relation to its climate change response or lack thereof. Understanding the Blue Pacific identity through the prism of constructivism is appropriate and relatively straight-forward. The Blue Pacific Continent is an identity that transcends international borders and has been constructed because of shared interests and concerns, namely the security of the region from the damning and worsening effects of climate change. A constructivist interpretation of the Blue Pacific would argue that as a social actor it is attempting to 'coordinate and pattern behaviour and channel it in one direction rather than another' (Ruggie 1998 cited in Alder 2002, pg.107). The Blue Pacific is first and foremost trying to ensure the survival of the region and considers the best way of achieving this to be

concerted collective action that moves the world away from fossil fuels. A consideration Australia does not seem to share.

The notion of identity according to constructivists is shaped by non-material structures such as norms, ideas and values and they subsequently influence the interests of a nation-state or political entity (Reus-Smit 2013, pg.224). According to constructivists, non-material structures such as norms and values have the ability to condition identity (2013, pg.224). 'Identity lies at the core of national and transnational interests' (Alder 2002, pg.106). A discursively constructed collective identity in the Pacific islands has become manifest in a new name – the Blue Pacific. The Blue Pacific's interests and values are explicit – they are an ocean people that are pushing the idea of regional self-determination in an attempt to protect and secure their collective future (Fry 2020, pg.300). This, from the outset, already seems to be at odds with Australian political values that have become apparent in their climate change response.

### Australia – Pacific Island Relations

Australia has enjoyed unrivalled power in the Pacific islands in recent decades and has consistently projected its middle power status towards the micro-powers that make up the Pacific islands (Schultz 2014, pg.548). There has however been a level of resistance exhibited by the Pacific islands, especially in recent years regarding climate change. Jonathon Schultz is critical of Australian foreign policy vis-a-vis the Pacific islands and although Australia provides generous development and humanitarian assistance, it is coupled 'with policies that disregard the Pacific island interests and particularities and nourish the image of an overbearing and bullying Australia' (2014, pg.548). Australia's approach to its relations with the Pacific islands is characterized by the following three ideas: 'threat, opportunity and special relationship' (Schultz 2014, pg.549). The first idea refers to the Pacific islands potentially serving as 'stepping stones' for an adversary to attack Australia and this is evident in Australia's strategic interest that ensures the Pacific islands continue to be friendly, and receptive to the security concerns of Australia (Schultz 2014, pg.549). With the rising influence of China in the Pacific islands, together with worsening Sino-Australian relations, Canberra will want to ensure that the region does not become a real security threat. This is also supported by Dr Tess Newton Cain and Dr Wesley Morgan who state that 'Australia's interest in the Pacific islands is above all driven by a strategic imperative to maintain political influence, and to deny the islands to other powers' (2020, pg.2).

Secondly, Australia sees the Pacific islands as a source of wealth and this is evident in policies that encourage 'tying aid to the purchase of Australian inputs, funding export promotion agencies and negotiating trade agreements' (Schultz 2014, pg.549). Finally, Australia considers itself to have a 'special responsibility to help the Pacific islands to improve the well-being of their peoples' (2014,

pg.550). This idea is particularly interesting because Australia's interpretation of the well-being of Pacific island peoples may be different to what they themselves consider it to be and this is especially true when it comes to issues pertaining to climate change. The Pacific islands have made it explicitly clear how the future wellbeing and security of the region can be satisfied and this has been largely overlooked by policy makers in Canberra.

The Pacific islands have viewed Australia as somewhat of a bully in the context of climate change and this is supported by Schultz who mentions the uninspiring way Australia has conducted itself, combined with its tendency to interfere in domestic politics has 'reinforced a widely held view of Australia as a bully' (2014, pg.550). The issue of climate change is 'increasingly shaping the relationship between Australia and its Pacific neighbors' (Parry 2019, pg.563) and the Pacific islands have notably increased their profile internationally through multilateral institutions within the context of climate change. This claim is supported by Fulori Manoa who explores how Pacific island countries have organised themselves as the Pacific Small Island Developing States to engage more effectively at the UN (2015, pg.89). The formation of the PSIDS was basically a move away from the PIF as PSIDS is made up of the PIF members minus Australia and New Zealand. The formation of PSIDS can be seen as the precursor to the discursive construction of Blue Pacific. The Pacific islands deemed it necessary to form PSIDS because of diverging interests, namely climate change. This became manifest at a UN level where the Pacific islands felt that although their voices were undoubtedly louder with Australia and New Zealand, their messaging became muzzled because of diverging interests (Manoa 2015, pg.91). Put simply, sustainable development and climate change are the most pressing issues for the Pacific islands at the UN but 'to be marginalised within your own grouping on these issues would be grounds to find another avenue to which to make your voice heard' (Manoa 2015, pg.91). Hence, the formation of PSIDS.

An interesting interaction between Australia and the Pacific islands in which the Blue Pacific and Sea Warrior identity was apparent in April 2014, the Canoe Building Day of Action. The intention was a voyage 'to Australia to deliver a message to the fossil-fuel industry' (Steiner 2015, pg.152). The campaign had two slogans 'We are not drowning. We are fighting' and 'It's 100% possible for us to be heard' (350 Pacific cited in Steiner 2015, pg.152). The organisers stated that the event was in protest to new coal mines. 'The fossil-fuel industry, with the support of the Australian government, big lenders, and other proponents, is planning gigantic new coal mines that would double Australia's coal exports which will have a devastating impact on the Pacific islands' (350 Pacific cited in Steiner 2015, pg.152). This is just one of many examples that illustrate the Pacific island's resistance to what they perceive as an inadequate response to climate change.

It is evident that climate change is causing tensions between Australia and the Pacific islands, with the latter becoming increasingly frustrated about Australia's lack of real and genuine commitment to combatting climate change. This brief overview of the case study highlights that the climate response of a developed state is engendering strong negative feelings and responses from developing states that are at an existential risk from the worsening and damning effects of climate change, and it is appropriate to believe that this may be evidence of repulsion.

## Analysis

In this section, through the application of predicate analysis, affective stance and subject positioning, I will present the representations that have been discursively constructed by the following Pacific island leaders: Tony De Brum, Christopher Loeak, Tuilaepa Sailele, Enele Sopoaga, Anote Tong, Frank Bainimarama and Matthew Wale. All leaders are elected officials and are relevant and appropriate figures to analyse, made evident in previous sections. The representations overlap but also have certain asymmetries that justify categorising them as separate representations.

## Representations

Representations are ‘meanings that are socially reproduced’ (Dunn & Neumann 2016, ch.1, pg.7). ‘When people who articulate the same representations organize, they make up a position in the discourse. Like representations, positions may be dominant or marginalized in various degrees’ (Dunn & Neumann 2016, ch.1, pg.8). An inventory of representations is the identification of ‘various representations and the possible asymmetries between them’ (Dunn & Nuemann 2016, ch.6, pg.23). What is of particular interest is the repetition of discourse because repetitions demonstrate institutionalization (2016, ch.6, pg.24). There are also methodical considerations in the way the researcher should map or organise the representations identified, aptly titled by Dunn and Nuemann as ‘mapping representations’. By mapping representations, the researcher can examine the ‘degree to which representations continue, change or challenge existing discourses’ (Dunn & Nuemann 2016, ch.5, pg.25). In the case of this study, the identification of whether representations change, disappear or continue between 2010 and 2014, and 2015 and 2020 is of specific interest. The question that will guide this chapter is, based on the analysis of Pacific island leaders’ discourse, what representations have the Pacific islands attributed to Australia? Each representation has been discursively constructed by Pacific island leaders, made evident by the supporting quotes of the leaders under analysis. Certain discourses can contribute to more than just one representation, as will be evident in the following sections. The rhetoric of some leaders may contribute to two, or even three representations that may have certain asymmetries.

## 2010 to 2014

There were three primary representations of Australia that were discursively constructed by Pacific island leaders between 2010 and 2014: Australia the big brother; Australia the outcast; and Australia the economically conscious.

**Australia the big brother:** The big brother representation is reproduced regularly in this period, mainly purported by Tony De Brum who is a Marshallese politician. This representation was not only made evident by the predicate nominate 'big brother' but also in discourse that expressed an expectation for Australia to take on a greater role concerning climate change. The big brother representation is arguably how Australia would want to be represented in Pacific island discourse.

The term 'big brother' is a nominate predicate that renames the subject (Australia) in a positive light. Being referred to as a big brother implies a sense of family and closeness, and of caring and protection. Because the nominative predicate is used consistently by De Brum in 2013 and 2014, it can be interpreted that the use is intentional and calculated as it applies a form of pressure on Australia to accept the responsibility of the big brother role and act decisively and positively on climate change.

The big brother representation also implies a power imbalance between Australia and the Pacific islands, and De Brum makes this quite clear. 'You have circles of diplomatic friends far wider and much more powerful than each of us, or even the small island states of the Pacific put together' (De Brum cited in Garrett 2013, para.7). The adverbial predicate 'much more' indicates that Australia, in the international system, has a far greater influence than the Pacific islands do and that the Pacific islands are looking to Australia to represent their interests concerning climate change i.e., taking on a greater responsibility and thus, taking on a big brother role.

De Brum's discourse reflects a degree of emotional intensity, as he is pleading with the Australian and New Zealand governments for assistance to combat the ongoing effects of climate change. 'We think that anything the Pacific islands do in terms of climate change must have the blessing, the support and the voice of Australia and New Zealand to the outside world' (De Brum cited in Garret 2013, para.6). By using the term 'we' De Brum is claiming to be speaking on behalf of the Pacific islands and therefore is engaging in discourse that is representative, to some degree, of the views in the region. By using the phrase 'must have the blessing, the support and the voice of Australia', it remains consistent with the big brother representation during this time period, reaffirming De Brum's belief that for the Pacific islands to successfully address the issue, they require the support of Australia who he likens to a big brother.

The big brother representation of Australia is interpreted to have a positive connotation to it. It is not a representation attributed to Australia that is interpreted to be in reference to the Orwellian meaning of the term 'big brother' which would be considered to have a negative connotation. De Brum is explicit in referring to Australia as a big brother to the Pacific islands. 'Australia will always be a big brother to the small island Pacific counties' (cited in Colvin 2013, para.20). De Brum also implies the big brother representation by speaking of the legal and moral responsibilities Australia has to the Pacific islands.

This representation is also implicitly attributed to Australia by the Prime Minister of Samoa, Tuilaepa Sailele, who denotes that because Australia is the biggest member in the PIF, they have a responsibility to do more. Sailele is positioning the subject (Australia) as the more powerful actor in Australian – Pacific island relations. 'Australia . . . are members of the Pacific Islands Forum and the membership there was especially important, because being the biggest member countries in the only consolidated grouping of islands in the Pacific, they should do more' (cited in Garrett 2014, para.14). Sailele's rhetoric proves to be consistent with the big brother representation as he is indicating that Australia is a leader in the region and with being a leader, comes a moral responsibility to smaller and more vulnerable countries. A big brother representation signifies, in terms of subject positioning, that Australia is not only perceived to have more influence, but that the Pacific islands consider Australia to be on their side.

The representation is reproduced regularly in this period but mainly purported by one leader, Tony De Brum. The big brother discourse constructs an image of a regional leader and hegemon that has previously lived up to the expectations conferred upon them by the Pacific islands. This is not only made evident by the predicate nominate 'big brother' but also in discourse that expressed an expectation for Australia to take on a greater role concerning climate change. In the later stages of the 2010 to 2014 period though, Australia seemed to have been abdicating its moral responsibilities and this becomes evident in the following representation.

**Australia the outcast:** An outcast can be described as someone 'who has been driven out of a group or rejected by society' (Knight 1997, pg.610). Australia's response to climate change has been repudiated by Pacific island nations within the PIF and the discourse supports this representation. This representation has certain asymmetries with the big brother representation, and it is mainly purported by Frank Bainimarama of Fiji and Enele Sopoaga of Tuvalu. The obvious asymmetries are that Australia the outcast has a negative rather than a positive connotation and that it does not depict Australia as a leader who is on the side of the Pacific islands. This representation of Australia is made



identifiable through the tool of subject positioning in which the aforementioned leaders position Australia away from the Pacific islands and not with, in the context of climate change.

Frank Bainimarama, Prime Minister of Fiji, positions Australia separate from the Pacific islands concerning climate change. 'When you take us to go talk about climate change, you are fighting on a different base, you are fighting for something else, not us' (Bainimarama cited in McDonald 2010, para.22). Bainimarama in this quote is expressing a feeling of disappointment and is making a claim that in regard to Australia's climate response, the latter is not taking the interests of Fiji (and it can be presumed the Pacific islands) into consideration. 'Different base' can be interpreted to mean diverging interests that indicate in regard to climate change, an absence of collective meaning vis-à-vis the focus of concern.

The rhetoric adopted by Tuvalu Prime Minister, Enele Sopoaga, also constructs an outcast representation of Australia. Sopoaga indirectly notifies the Australian Government that 'they can stay out' (cited in ABC Online 2014a, para.18), in reference to any new global agreements pertaining to climate change. He goes on to say, 'if they decide not to be part of the pact, that's their own decision - but we are already seeing a lot of damages, a lot of destruction to the islands' (cited in ABC Online 2014a, para.18). Australia is implied to be a hindrance to the development of global agreements but more specifically, they are positioned as being opposed to the Pacific islands' interests, in dissidence to the group's (PIF) consensus. Sopoaga finishes by declaring, 'and if that is the case with Australia, that is their own decision - but that should not stop the world - the willing - to go forward' (cited in ABC Online 2014a, para.18). Sopoaga clearly positions Australia as outside of 'the willing' in which the Pacific islands are part of.

Christopher Loeak, President of the Marshall Islands, said after the 2013 PIF and before the 2013 Australian election, 'I believe they will come up with more ambitious targets than currently are in place now . . . But Australia now is going to an election' (cited in Dorney 2013, para.12). Loeak in this instance predicates that the incumbent government has not developed any adequate policies that address climate change, but he remains optimistic that they eventually will, depending on the outcome of the election. Although Loeak adopts a more diplomatic discourse, by implying that Australia's targets are insufficient Loeak highlights a disconnect between Australia's response and the Pacific islands' expectations and therefore, positions Australia separate from the Pacific islands. Australia as an outcast is quite clearly in conflict with the big brother representation that is also constructed between 2010 and 2014.

**Australia the economically conscious:** This representation is discursively constructed by Samoan Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele who is quoted saying, 'I am aware the extreme preoccupation of the present leadership with budget savings' (cited in ABC Online 2014b, para.14). Sailele expresses his displeasure towards Australia by referring to the spending cuts in the annual budget proposed by the Australian Government in 2014. The adjective 'extreme' predicates that according to Tuilaepa Sailele, the Australian government is far too fixated on reducing costs in the annual budget and in the process is completely disregarding the effects of climate change. It implies that Sailele not only perceives the Coalition Government to be fixated on budget savings, but that this fixation is unwarranted because it means it is not taking the necessary and urgent steps to reduce Australia's carbon emissions. Ultimately, Sailele constructs an image of Australia as one that does not take the interests of the Pacific islands seriously.

**Concluding Remarks:** Between 2010 and 2014 there were varied representations of Australia discursively constructed by the Pacific islands but none can be considered to be a dominant representation.

## 2015 to 2020

In the period between 2015 and 2020, the big brother representation disappeared and this is made evident in the analysis in which the term 'big brother' ceased being used as a nominate predicate attributed to Australia. In addition, the representation of Australia as an outcast continued to be reproduced in the 2015 to 2020 period. Emerging representations in this period positioned Australia as, what can be interpreted to be, an ill-intentioned and climate illiterate bully that was avoiding its responsibilities as a regional leader and hegemon. That is, they are seen to act with a strong sense of arrogance and with little consideration for the interests of the Pacific islands. In addition, the Australian Government's close relationship with the coal industry and the latter's strong influence in policy pertaining to climate change and energy, adds to this perception of Australia as climate illiterate.

**Big Brother (discontinued):** What is immediately noticeable in the discourse is the disappearance of the predicate nominative 'big brother'. It should be noted though that the primary producer of this representation, Tony De Brum, unfortunately passed away in 2017. It is mentioned once by Anote Tong who states, 'we expect them as our big brothers, not our bad brothers, our big brothers to support us on this one' (cited in Cochrane 2015b, para.4). In all the articles reviewed between 2015 and 2020 this is the only quote to mention 'big brother' and although the term is used, it is not attributed directly to Australia. The quote implies that Australia's current actions reflect that of a bad brother and not a big brother and therefore, it is not a representation that is reproduced by the Pacific

islands in this period. Anote Tong, President of Kiribati, said this in the lead up to the 2015 PIF and it is in relation to Australia's lack of support on stronger climate change action. Tong uses the nominative predicate 'big brother' that De Brum consistently used in the preceding years, to highlight the expectations the Pacific islands have of Australia. Although the expectation is for Australia to play the part of a big brother and take the lead on such issues, Tong revises his current representation by changing the nominative predicate to 'bad brother'. Australia is then viewed not as a leader in the region, but as an ill-intentioned bully. 'Bad' is an adjective that denotes a sense of disagreement and implies that in the context of climate change, Australia is beginning to be viewed as more of an adversary than it is a friend or 'big brother'. The rhetoric by Tong is evidence of a feeling of disappointment but there is also a sense of desperation.

This can be interpreted to mean that the sense of family and closeness, and of caring and protection that is associated with the big brother representation, also ceases to be relevant in relations pertaining to climate change. The disappearance of this representation positions Australia in ideological competition with the Pacific islands and contributes to further strengthening the representation of Australia as an outcast.

**Australia the uncharitable:** This representation of Australia is purported by Bainimarama, Tong, Sopoaga and De Brum. The climate debate is framed by the Pacific islands as a dichotomy, on the one side there are those states that are willing to take the necessary steps and there are those on the other side, those who are not - Australia is positioned as being an actor that is not willing.

Frank Bainimarama is unequivocally direct in his criticism of Australia. 'Rather than side with us, Australia in particular is siding with what I call the coalition of the selfish' (cited in Fox 2015, para.11). Bainimarama uses a nominative predicate to rename actors that are not willing to make substantive commitments to the fight against climate change, 'the coalition of the selfish'. He implies that Australia is part of this group and therefore, positions Australia (the subject), as opposing the Pacific islands. The adjective 'selfish' indicates that Bainimarama is discontent with Australia's response to climate change and moreover, it implies that Australia is acting in its own self-interest and not taking the needs of the Pacific islands into consideration in policy making.

Bainimarama distinguishes Australia and the Pacific islands as opposing sides, one side is depicted as being morally right and the other, morally wrong. This representation of Australia is further supported by Bainimarama's description of 'the coalition of the selfish'. 'Those industrialised nations which are putting the welfare of their carbon polluting industries and their workers before our welfare and survival as Pacific Islanders' (Bainimarama cited in Fox 2015, para.11). By beginning with the adjective 'industrialised' to describe the nations who make up the coalition of the selfish, Bainimarama

predicates that Australia is a developed nation, which in the context of his rhetoric has a negative connotation to it. Bainimarama asserts that developed nations will routinely prioritise their own interests first and foremost and that the effects of climate change to vulnerable nations are of peripheral concern. By drawing a comparison between the welfare of industries and workers to the survival of an entire population, Bainimarama is insinuating that industrialised nations are consciously favouring the carbon polluting industries and its workers over the survival of the Pacific island populations. This is not a flattering depiction of Australia that is discursively constructed by Bainimarama, as the welfare of industries over Pacific populations is presented as a choice that is morally corrupt and selfish.

Sopoaga also contributes the discursive construction of a binary opposition concerning the morality of climate change. Sopoaga frames the issue as a dichotomy, stating 'no matter how much money you put on the table, it does not give you the excuse to not do the right thing' (cited in Clarke 2019b, para.5). Sopoaga is inferring that the course of action Australia is taking in reference to the continued burning of fossil fuels, cannot be offset by large sums of money in the form of aid to the Pacific islands. The issue is instead framed as a moral one and Australia is subsequently positioned on the opposing and 'wrong' side. This implies certain attributes, namely selfishness and obstinacy. The former because Australia is acting in its own self-interest, which is anticipated in international relations as it is expected that states will act in their own self-interests. What is of concern, is that the Pacific islands perceive Australia's actions to have negative externalities that the former is assuming the cost for, and the latter seems to be uncompromising and stubborn in addressing the sources of the negative externality because it is not in its supposed self-interest to do so.

Australia is explicitly represented as arrogant by Aote Tong who states that 'as long as there is this kind of arrogance in any position of leadership, we will continue to have a lot of tension' (cited in Mathiesen 2015, para.6). This was said in response to a comment made by the then Australian Immigration Minister, Peter Dutton, who was caught on a microphone apparently joking about rising sea-levels in the Pacific region at the 2015 PIF (Mathiesen 2015, para.1). Tong implies that this is not the first example of arrogance displayed by the Australian Government in the context of climate change and that consequently, the Pacific islands take offence to such comments.

The representation of Australia as arrogant is further supported by Tony De Brum's criticism of another apparent climate change joke made about the Pacific islands by then Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop. De Brum said, 'Australia has still not learned they should not mess with the islands and make jokes about the islands and climate change' (cited in Taylor 2015, para.3). The adverb 'still' alters the adjective 'learned' to predicate that Australia has in the past, and continues to in the present, to not

take the issue of climate change seriously. De Brum's response indicates a sense of disbelief that Australia continues to regard the issue of climate change as being of peripheral concern. This is again made evident by the adverb 'still', which is used as an adverbial intensifier, emphasising De Brum's disbelief that Australia not only continues to not take the issue seriously, but they also mock the Pacific islands and climate change. This again implies that Australia is perceived to have displayed arrogance in the past towards the Pacific islands, in addition to the fact that although it undoubtedly causes offence, Australia continues to exhibit an arrogant attitude towards the Pacific islands in the context of climate change. De Brum promulgated the big brother representation between 2010 and 2014 so this change in discourse suggests a clear and significant shift in his perception of Australia.

The perceived arrogance of Australia in some cases is attributed by the Pacific islands to neo-colonial tendencies that suggests that a feeling of superiority exists within the Australian Government. This arrogance is interpreted by some in the Pacific islands as 'neo-colonial prescriptions' (Bainimarama cited in Dziedzic 2019, para.9). This was said in response to former Australian Labor Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd 'who suggested that some small low-lying Pacific nations threatened by climate change could trade their sovereignty in return for Australian citizenship' (Dziedzic 2019, para.8). Bainimarama's response suggests that he perceives the Australian Government's response to climate change reflects an archaic approach to its relations with the Pacific islands, that is, they see the island nations of the Pacific as subservient instead of partners on an equal footing.

Anote Tong positions Australia vis-à-vis China 'as the worst of two evils' (cited in Zhou 2019 para.15). The representation of China in the Pacific islands cannot be standardised as each island nation shares a different relationship with China but despite this, Tong obviously has a negative view of China as well as Australia, that may also be shared by other actors in the Pacific islands. This position purported by Tong and supported by other leaders in the region, paints a dismal picture for Australia and again, it is consistent with the representation of Australia as uncharitable. The position of Australia against China is also propagated by Bainimarama who is quoted saying 'the prime minister was very insulting, very condescending, not good for the relationship ... [Australians] keep saying the Chinese are going to take over. Guess why?' (cited in Walsh 2019, para.22). This was said in response to the 2019 PIF in which Australia 'refused to endorse a statement calling for a ban on new coal mines and rapid emissions reductions' (Walsh 2019, para.20). The adjectives 'insulting', and 'condescending' coupled with the adverbial intensifier 'very' predicate that Bainimarama exhibits a strong feeling of displeasure towards Australia. He then indicates that the Prime Minister's actions will be detrimental to the relationship between Fiji and Australia. Due to the fact that this is a climate issue, and that Fiji shares

a collective identity with other Pacific island nations (the Blue Pacific), the displeasure displayed by Fiji will also be shared by other Pacific island nations.

The inference being made by Bainimarama is that Australia's treatment of the Pacific islands that reflects self-centeredness, is forcing some island nations to look to China for support instead of Australia, which signifies a decline in the latter's soft power in the region because of the selfish, self-interested, arrogant, and ultimately, uncharitable policies and actions they continue to take in relation to climate change.

**Australia the outcast (continued):** This representation has continued from the 2010 to 2014 period, although the Pacific islands have modified the framing of the issue to that of a dichotomy - positioning Australia on the opposite side of the debate and in direct competition with the Pacific islands. The representation of Australia as an outcast is propagated by several leaders in the region and is primarily made evident by the application of subject positioning. It has already been established in the previous representation of Australia that the Pacific islands have framed the issue as a dichotomy and positioned the former as being against the interests of the Pacific islands. There are though, several more examples of discourse employed by Pacific island leaders that contribute to the discursively constructed representation of Australia as an outcast.

'We cannot be regional partners under this step-up initiative — genuine and durable partners — unless the Government of Australia takes a more progressive response to climate change' (Sopoaga cited in Dziedzic 2018, para.4). The term 'progressive' is used as an adjective predicate that infers that Australia's response to climate change is regressive and insufficient and highlights a clear course of action for the Australian Government to take if it is to satisfy the interests of the Pacific islands. That is that Australia must take substantive action in response to climate change otherwise they will continue to be positioned as being against the region, and therefore an outcast. It is also inferred that Australia cannot be 'genuine and durable partners' in any capacity if the Australian Government continues with its regressive climate policies, thus threatening Australia's soft power influence in the region.

'I think they need to come to the party, if they really are our friends then they should be looking after our future as well' (Tong cited in Cochrane 2015c, para.5). Tong is suggesting that Australia's policies concerning climate change and energy need to pay significant attention to the welfare and to the future of the Pacific islands. In addition, Tong is inferring that this is an expectation and even a condition of friendship and cooperation between the two actors. By inferring this condition, Tong is intentionally positioning Australia as an outcast and unless they adopt the necessary climate and

energy policies that address the issues and interests of the Pacific islands, then Australia will continue to remain a climate pariah in the region.

‘I thought Morrison was a good friend of mine — apparently not,’ (Bainimarama cited in Clarke 2019b, para.12). The discourse of Bainimarama again positions Australia as an outcast and even has undertones of an adversarial relationship. Bainimarama infers that he has in the past shared a friendly relationship with Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, but that now because of Australia’s climate response that the Morrison Government is in command of, it is adversely affecting the relations between Fiji and Australia and it can be presumed, Australia and the Pacific islands.

Scott Morrison is ‘expressing views that completely denies that there is climate change already happening in the Pacific’ (Sopoaga cited in Handley 2019, para.28). Because Sopoaga and the Pacific islands have made it explicitly clear what its interests are concerning climate change and what they expect of Australia, for the Australian Prime Minister to challenge the social realities and experiences of the Pacific islands is frustrating but all too familiar to the latter. The use of the word ‘completely’, is intended to construct an image of Morrison, and therefore Australia, as climate sceptics. If the Pacific islands regard Australia as climate sceptics, then it again contributes to the discursively constructed representation of Australia as an outcast because they have completely different interpretations of the climate issue and as a result, are not seen as being part of the same discursively constructed community.

‘We expect them as our big brothers, not our bad brothers, our big brothers to support us on this one’ (Tong cited in Cochrane 2015b, para.4). The discourse expressed by Tong has also been used in a previous representation of Australia, but it also contributes to the construction of the outcast representation. Although Tong mentions the nominative predicate ‘big brother’, he is not attributing this representation to Australia. Instead, he is suggesting that Australia’s current actions are giving off the impression of a ‘bad brother’. The use of the nominative predicative ‘bad brother’ instead of ‘big brother’ implies that the Pacific islands perceive Australia as an ill-intentioned actor with interests and motives that are incompatible with their own. This subsequently positions Australia as a challenger and a threat to the climate interests of the Pacific islands and therefore, is considered an outcast.

**Australia and the coal industry:** A common representation of Australia that is discursively constructed by several leaders is Australia’s strong affiliation with its domestic coal industry. This relationship has been comprehensively covered by Australian media, but the fact that external actors have also highlighted the relationship in addition to the distorted influence the industry holds over the government, underscores how unusual and disruptive it is. Bainimarama highlights the Australian Government’s relationship with the coal industry and is again unequivocal in his condemnation of

Australia. He comments, 'from where we are sitting, we cannot imagine how the interests of any single industry can be placed above the welfare of Pacific peoples — vulnerable people in the world over.' (Bainimarama cited in Dziedzic & Handley 2019, para.4). Bainimarama is referring to the coal industry and again frames the issue as a dichotomy, this time between satisfying the interests of the coal industry or the welfare of Pacific peoples. Australia is positioned as being on the opposing side. Bainimarama uses certain adjectives to intensify the moral consequences of this binary choice. For example, the adjective 'vulnerable' is used to both accentuate the Pacific peoples' perilous situation, and to further highlight the immoral position Australia is taking by preferencing the interests of the coal industry over the welfare of its Pacific neighbours.

Bainimarama is consistent in highlighting Australia's use of, and relationship with coal, 'I appeal to Australia to do everything possible to achieve a rapid transition from coal to energy sources that do not contribute to climate change' (Bainimarama cited in Clarke 2019c, para.9). Bainimarama is highlighting a clear course of action for the Australian Government to take and underlines that the burning of coal is directly linked to climate change that is causing harm and destruction to Pacific island nations.

The framing of the issue as a dichotomy between the interests of the coal industry and the welfare of Pacific peoples is also propagated by Aote Tong. 'I understand what's being said, that if they agree to those reductions in emissions, then it would hurt their industries and it would hurt their life, standard of living . . . but what I'm perhaps failing to communicate across is that while it will affect their standards of living, for us it will affect the future of our people' (Tong cited in Tlozek 2015, para.12). A clear course of action is being presented by Aote Tong: that Australia must cut their emissions and by extension cut their affiliation with the coal industry if the Pacific islands are to have any sort of future. Tong is also making it explicit that he understands the arguments Australia is putting forward but that Australia's concern with its standard of living pales in contrast to the effects that climate change poses to the Pacific.

The clear course of action suggested by Tong is also pushed by Sopoaga who is very clear in his messaging towards Australia about its relationship with the coal industry. He expresses his strong desire for Australia to ban new coal mines from being built. 'Cutting down your emissions, including not opening your coal mines, that is the thing we want to see.' (Sopoaga cited in Clarke 2019b, para.6). 'So, it is my strong prayer that Australia will reconsider opening this new coal mine.' (Sopoaga cited in Dziedzic 2018, para.17). Sopoaga contributes to positioning Australia as opposing the Pacific islands and presents Australia with a clear course of action if it genuinely wants to be taken seriously in climate negotiations or at the PIF.



References to the Australian economy, by extension, are references to the coal industry as the argument the Australian Government has and continues to make, is that shutting down coal mines will risk jobs and in turn, harm the economy (ABC Online 2019, para.5). Sopoaga addresses this argument by again framing the issue as a binary choice, positioning Australia on the opposing side of the Pacific islands. "We expressed very strongly during our exchange, between me and Scott [Morrison], I said: 'You are concerned about saving your economy in Australia ... I am concerned about saving my people in Tuvalu,'" (Sopoaga cited in Clarke 2019a, para.16). Australia's fixation with its economy and by extension, the coal industry is framed as a choice concerning Australia's morality and political values. If Australia continues to be perceived to preference its economy over the interests and welfare of Pacific islands, then the representation of Australia preferencing coal over the Pacific will continue to be reproduced.

Matthew Wale, a politician from the Solomon Islands, states "what a missed opportunity to really 'step up'. 'Family' has been exploited for domestic Australian politics" (cited in Handley 2019, para.7). The term 'step up' is in reference to a foreign policy initiative concerning Australia's engagement in the Pacific that has been criticised by Pacific island nation leaders because it does not adequately address their climate concerns (SBS 2019, para.1). Domestic Australian politics can be interpreted to mean in this instance the entire political landscape in Australia that sees the coal industry play a substantive role in determining the outcomes of climate and energy related policy. Wale is implying that Australia has once again disregarded the genuine concerns of the Pacific in favour of satisfying the interests of the fossil-fuel industry. The term 'family' is poignant because it implies a closeness that has not necessarily been evident in the discourse after 2014 but it is also employed to heighten the effect of the term 'exploited', as it makes the betrayal of the Australia Government all the more disheartening.

'The dialogue, the conversation has to carry on. It cannot be dictated by the coal industry in the background.' (Tong cited in Doran 2019, para.7). Anote Tong is highlighting a common discourse that is prevalent within Australia that its coal industry has a disproportionate influence in Australian politics and that that situation cannot continue. The verb 'dictated' predicates that the Australian Government does not have full control over the implementation of climate policy, or that the Australian Government is taking a weak stance against the industry. Tong continues speaking about the influence the coal industry has in Australia's climate policy, 'coal is not part of the democracy, it's not part of the justice' (Tong cited in Doran 2019, para.9). Tong asserts that the coal industry has infiltrated the decision-making processes in Canberra and that they have an undue influence that undermines democracy in Australia which in turn undermines environmental justice. There is an ample amount of discourse that contributes to the construction of the representation that the

Australian Government has ceded influence to the coal industry concerning policies and actions that attempt to address climate change.

**Concluding Remarks:** Between 2015 and 2020 there were two dominant representations of Australia that were discursively constructed by various Pacific island leaders, the first being 'Australia and the coal industry' and 'Australia the uncharitable'.

## Application of the Repulsion Framework

The repulsion framework will be applied to the representations of Australia that were discursively constructed by Pacific island leaders. The representations that were identified were: Australia the big brother; Australia the outcast; Australia the economically conscious; Australia the uncharitable; and Australia and the coal industry. The repulsion framework will be applied to each individual representation in an attempt to understand whether Australia, because of its response to climate change, elicited a feeling of repulsion in the Pacific islands.

**Australia the big brother:** In this representation identified between 2010 and 2014, it can be interpreted that there is no feeling of repulsion evident in this particular discourse. The first precondition of the repulsion framework is that a collective identity must be absent and in this representation of Australia it would be difficult to conclude that a collective identity does not exist. Being referred to as a big brother implies that the Pacific islands view Australia as being on their side which in turn, would infer shared interests. In addition, the nominative predicate 'big brother' infers benevolence, as a big brother would be unlikely to hurt you and would in most cases take your interests seriously. A big brother representation is consistent more so with attraction than it is with repulsion, and this is because a big brother representation implies benignity, which is a soft power currency. Being benign, is to be perceived as someone who is 'unlikely to hurt you and . . . likely to take your interests seriously' (Vuving 2009, pg.9). A big brother representation indicates that the agent would be unlikely to hurt you because the role of a big brother is associated with ensuring the security of the client at all times. Therefore, it can be concluded that this representation of Australia, constructed by the Pacific islands does not satisfy the criteria of the repulsion framework.

**Australia the economically conscious:** Australia is constructed by the Pacific islands as preferencing the wellbeing of its domestic economy over the welfare of Pacific island peoples. In this representation of Australia there is an absence of a collective identity that is made evident by a difference of interpretation regarding the climate change issue. The Pacific islands perceive Australia to interpret the climate issue as a predominantly economic and financial issue, whereas the former interpret the issue as a matter of survival. This is made apparent by Samoan Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele, who implies that Australia's actions reflect an unwarranted preoccupation towards their own economy and by effect, diminishes the urgency and seriousness of the climate change issue. This is not an interpretation that the Pacific islands share and accordingly, it is considered that Australia does not belong to the same community in relation to climate change. Therefore, it is determined that an absence of identity is evident.

Australia's perceived fixation with ensuring that its domestic economy is not affected by its climate change response is reflected in its policies. Specifically in this instance, it is reflected in the annual budget that is interpreted by Sailele to be inadequate in responding to climate change. This is an example of repugnance, as Australia's actions indicate that they are implementing policies that undermine the interests of the Pacific islands. This representation evolves into the discursively constructed representation, Australia and the coal industry.

**Australia as an outcast:** As this representation of Australia was reproduced in both periods, it will be analysed in two parts and this proves to be appropriate because of the evolution of the Pacific islands' identity to the Blue Pacific in the second period. Firstly, in the period between 2010 and 2014 it is apparent that a collective identity is absent, and this is made evident by the diverging interests between the two actors. Within the context of climate change Australia is perceived as an almost pariah-like state because its interests are so far detached from those of the Pacific islands and the PIF. While the Pacific islands are determined to do anything within their means to address climate change, Australia has been determined to protect its own economic interests that are perceived to be incompatible with the interests of the Pacific islands. The absence of a collective identity is made most evident by Bainimarama's rhetoric that Australia is 'fighting on a different base'. This indicates that the identities between the two actors are incompatible because of a difference in interpretation concerning climate change that causes the Pacific islands to consider Australia as being external to their climate community.

The PIF as an institution has put climate change at the forefront of its discussions despite reservations from the Australian Government. Australia through this institution has not conducted itself in a manner that the Pacific islands would have expected of them. Vuving argues that 'the conduct of foreign policy through international institutions and organisations is another channel in which states signal benignity and beauty' (2009, pg.15). The Pacific islands have instead regarded the conduct of Australia's actions and the substance of their policy through the PIF as repugnant and belligerent. Australia's actions are considered repugnant because their climate change response is interpreted as being contradictory to the Pacific islands' policies. Belligerence is made evident by the understanding that Australia is not taking the concerns of the Pacific islands pertaining to climate change seriously. In addition to repugnance and belligerence, this representation of Australia is also evidence of incompetence as Australia's conduct within the PIF is in dissidence to the consensus that is held among most, if not all the other members, and consequently they believe Australia needs to be taking a more substantive approach in combating climate change.

In reference to the representation of Australian as an outcast between 2015 and 2020, the interests of the Pacific islands became more cohesive and explicit from the conception and subsequent discursive construction of the Blue Pacific identity. This is made evident by the strong consensus among the island nations pertaining to their interests and values that indicate a strong connection to the Pacific Ocean and an unshakable dedication to preserving its beauty. The Blue Pacific considers climate change to be the greatest security threat to the region and because of this, the region's policies are entrenched in addressing the worsening effects of climate change. Australia's actions and policies infer that its interests are not aligned with the Blue Pacific's and therefore a collective identity is undoubtedly absent regarding climate change.

In this continued representation of Australia, its political values and policies are regarded by the Pacific islands as being repugnant, incompetent and belligerent. The Pacific islands consider Australia's response to climate change as incompetent because as Sopoaga indicates, the policies of the Australian Government are regressive and insufficient in combatting climate change, which can be regarded as a failure to implement policy. Moreover, Sopoaga discursively constructs Australia's Prime Minister as somewhat of a climate sceptic which indicates that the leader of Australia is expressing views that are in opposition to the region and international community.

Repugnance is expressed in the Pacific islands' perception that Australia is not only challenging the lived experiences and social realities of the region, but also their interests. Sopoaga states that Scott Morrison was denying that climate change was happening in the Pacific, which indicates that Australia is undermining the interests and climate policies of the region. Furthermore, the discourse consistently positions Australia as adopting policies that contradict the policies of the Pacific islands; namely that Australia's inadequate climate response which supports the continuation of the fossil-fuel industry, is perceived to be opposing regional and global efforts to reduce carbon emissions.

The outcast representation between 2015 and 2020 also features elements of belligerence. Bainimarama's discourse expresses undertones of an adversarial relationship between himself and Scott Morrison in relation to their diverging interests concerning climate change. An adversarial relationship, discursively constructed by Bainimarama, indicates that the client is under the impression that the agent is likely to indirectly hurt them through the continued burning of fossil-fuels and inadequate carbon emission reduction targets.

**Australia and the coal industry:** Between 2015 and 2020 there was an emergence of a discourse pertaining to the Australian Government's close affiliation with the domestic coal and fossil-fuel industries. This representation of Australia was discursively constructed by several Pacific island leaders, including Anote Tong, Frank Bainimarama, Enele Sopoaga and Matthew Wale. It is noticeable

in this representation of Australia, that there is an absence of a collective identity and it is again made evident by the diverging interests of the two actors in relation to the coal industry in Australia, together with a difference of interpretation concerning the seriousness climate change poses to the Pacific.

Diverging interests are evident in the rhetoric of the Pacific islands, who have quite explicitly expressed their concerns and bafflement of Australia's continued support of the coal industry. The Pacific islands consider it to be in direct conflict with the interests and values of the region. Australia's relationship with, and support of, the coal industry is interpreted as a manifestation of its political values that spills over into its foreign and domestic policy. This relationship is interpreted to be incompetent, repugnant and belligerent.

Referring to incompetence, the agent can be considered incompetent if there is a continuation of a policy that is not only believed to be a failure, but that is in direct conflict with the client's values and in dissidence to international norms. Substantive climate responses have become consistent with international environmental norms, which have become institutionalised within the international system. Australia's climate change response and related energy policies are not interpreted to be consistent with these norms.

Responding to climate change can be considered a norm that fits within the meta-norm of environmental justice (Lawless et al. 2020, pg.2). Meta-norms have become 'manifest in various forms at the global scale and are reflected in the contemporary objectives of many global organizations' (2020, pg.2). This can be attributed to norm diffusion and this can be extended to include the objectives of states, in addition to global organizations. Australia, by continuing to support the domestic coal industry, is considered by the Pacific islands to be acting in dissidence with international norms. This is viewed by the Pacific islands as both repugnant and incompetent. In reference to the latter, the Pacific islands interpret it to be incompetent because Australia has at its disposal the necessary resources to transition away from fossil-fuels and towards renewable energy but have been unwilling to do so because of the influence the coal industry has. This is made evident by the expectation that Australia should 'do everything possible to achieve a rapid transition from coal to energy sources that do not contribute to climate change' (Bainimarama cited in Clarke 2019, para.9). It can be assumed that this expectation would not be conferred upon them if the Pacific islands did not believe that Australia could achieve this.

The incompetence of the Australian Government in the eyes of the Pacific islands is also made evident by the perception that the latter considers the coal industry to have an undue influence on Canberra's policy making. Tong suggests that the coal industry dictates the climate conversation in Australian

politics, and this is perceived to be a failure of effective and good governance as 'coal is not part of democracy, it is not part of justice' (Tong cited in Doran 2019, para.8). Australia may well perceive their functioning coal industry and exports as successful, but the Pacific islands consider it to be a failure because it comes at the expense of its and the international community's climate interests and the values the Blue Pacific promulgates, that they understandably thought Australia subscribed to.

Regarding repugnance, the continued support of the coal industry is in direct conflict with and undermines the political values and climate interests of the Pacific islands, in addition to the contemporary environmental objectives of the global community. The continued support of the coal industry by Australia is perceived to be directly undercutting the efforts made by the Pacific islands and the international community to reduce carbon emissions. The Pacific islands interpret these actions to be examples of Australia acting in a selfish manner that reflects a tendency to satisfy its own self-interests at the expense of climate-vulnerable nations which satisfies the criteria for repugnance.

Australia is considered to be belligerent by the Pacific islands because the continued backing of the coal industry reflects an action that not only indirectly causes harm to the Pacific islands, but also reflects an action that abandons the interests of the island nations. This is made especially evident by Bainimarama who indicates that Australia is placing the interests of just one industry above the welfare of all Pacific island populations. In effect, Australia is not taking the concerns and interests of the Pacific islands seriously and the latter is becoming increasingly apprehensive because they consider Australia's response to climate change as an action that will likely cause harm and destruction to them.

**Australia the uncharitable:** An absence of a collective identity is apparent in this representation of Australia. It is made evident by firstly, the Pacific islands perceiving Australia to not belong to the same community that implies a difference in interpretation in regard to the climate crises. Secondly, because interests are divergent. As a result, repugnance and belligerence have become apparent. Repugnance is clear as Australia is viewed as acting in a selfish and self-interested manner that demonstrates a conflict in political values. Its belligerence is manifest in its egoism, arrogance and peripheral concern for Pacific island interests.

Concerning repugnance, Australia's political values are reflected in their actions and inactions and these have been highlighted by Pacific island leaders who consistently refer to Canberra's response to climate change as selfish. Its response is perceived to undermine and directly challenge the political values and environmental objectives of the Pacific islands. This perception is consistently expressed in the representation of Australia the uncharitable, and it is made especially evident by Sopoaga who explicitly positions Australia as being on the wrong side of the moral dilemma. The discourse of Pacific

islands leaders consistently positions Australia's actions as either being wrong or opposing Pacific island interests, therefore undermining the efforts made by the Pacific islands.

Belligerence is made evident by several examples but the most pertinent of those are the discourses that are in response to Australian federal ministers apparently mocking the Pacific islands. Australia's arrogance culminated in Australian federal ministers joking about climate change in the region, which the Pacific islands considered to weaken the urgency and seriousness of the climate change issue. This is evidence of Australia not taking the interests of the region seriously and by doing so, is further contributing to climate scepticism that ultimately hurts the Pacific islands. In addition, the Pacific islands consider Australia's unwavering commitment to satisfy its own self-interests, to produce negative externalities (carbon pollution) that make the former believe that Australia's actions are likely to hurt them.

**Concluding Remarks:** In this section I have applied the repulsion framework to the discursively constructed representations of Australia acquired through a discourse analysis. The repulsion framework has a strong constructivist standpoint as it has specifically focused on the absence of a collective identity, as well as values, norms, and shared meaning. All the discursively constructed representations, except for 'Australia the big brother', exhibit an absence of a collective identity and in different capacities are interpreted to be repugnant, incompetent and belligerent to the Pacific islands.

The representations that prove to be the most reliable are those that are discursively constructed and reproduced by several Pacific island leaders. 'Australia and the coal industry' and 'Australia the uncharitable' prove to be the most dominant representations due to the number of leaders who contributed to its discursive construction and the frequency in which they were reproduced.



## Addressing the Research Questions

The Pacific islands discursively constructed representations of Australia between 2010 and 2020 that are characterized as the following: Australia the big brother; Australia the outcast; Australia and the coal industry; Australia the economically conscious; and Australia the uncharitable. The representation of 'Australia the big brother' was evident in the 2010 to 2014 period but disappeared in the following period. 'Australia the outcast' continued from the first period of analysis to the second, but was discursively altered through subject positioning. The 'Australia the uncharitable' and 'Australia and the coal industry' representations were not apparent in the first period, but emerged in the second period. Through the application of the repulsion framework, it was discovered that all but one of these representations (Australia the big brother) elicited a feeling of repulsion in the Pacific islands.

Based on the findings of the analysis and the subsequent application of the repulsion framework, it can be concluded with some certainty that Australia's climate change response has elicited a feeling of repulsion in the Pacific islands. Australia's climate change response elicited a feeling of repulsion because it was considered to be either repugnant, belligerent or incompetent.

The framework has facilitated detailed explanation of how climate change responses by an agent can engender a feeling of repulsion in the client. First and foremost, the absence of a collective identity pertaining to the climate change issue had to be evident and this was identified through either diverging interests or the client not considering the agent as belonging to their community. Australia was not seen to be part of the Pacific island's community because of a difference in interpretation concerning the severity climate change poses to Australia and the Pacific islands, and even the world itself. This was made apparent in the differences between the two actors' risk assessments of climate change and the urgency they displayed in addressing the issue. It can be argued that if a collective identity were evident, then both social actors would have attached similar meanings to the material world around them. In this instance, it would have meant that both Australia and the Pacific islands would have understood the risk of climate change similarly, but it was obvious in the relations between the agent and the client (identified in Pacific island discourse) that this was simply not true.

After identifying an absence of a collective identity between the agent and the client, an analysis of the discursively constructed representations of the agent was conducted. If the client interpreted the actions or inactions of the agent in relation to the climate change issue as repugnant, incompetent or belligerent, then a feeling of repulsion was said to be evident.

Repugnance as a power debt was made apparent in several representations of Australia. In most cases the Pacific islands considered the values that were manifest in Australia's response to climate change to be repugnant because they undermined its own efforts to address the issue. This was especially evident in the representation of 'Australia and the coal industry' in which the Pacific islands determined Australia's support of the coal industry to be undermining efforts they were making both at a regional and multilateral level.

In addition, Australia was considered repugnant because as it was recognised that action on climate change had gone through the process of norm diffusion in the international system, Australia was considered to be acting in dissidence to this norm. Australia's response to climate change has been interpreted by the Pacific islands as repugnant, which has created a power debt for Australia concerning their relations with the Pacific islands.

The Pacific islands regarded Australia's response to climate change to be incompetent because they not only perceived Australia, as a developed Western country, to have the necessary resources at its disposal, but expected it to also possess the willingness and moral stewardship to develop substantive policy that addressed the climate issue. But instead, it was evident in the representations of Australia that the Pacific islands deemed Australia's actions to be a failure of policy. In one specific representation of Australia, the Pacific islands attributed this failure to Australia's domestic coal industry, which the Pacific islands perceive to have an unwarranted influence on Canberra's policy-making and subsequently, they consider effective governance to have been forfeited.

Finally concerning belligerence, it was identified that the Pacific islands believed that Australia's response to climate change was indirectly hurting them or adding to the hurt they were already experiencing. Furthermore, it was revealed that the Pacific islands believe Canberra do not take its interests into consideration, nor take them seriously. Nowhere is this clearer than in the representation, 'Australia the uncharitable'. Leaders of Pacific island nations engaged in discourse that discursively constructed Australia as belligerent after the latter was reported to be joking about the seriousness of climate change.

Based on the research conducted, it can be concluded with a degree of certainty that in many of the discursively constructed representations of Australia an absence of identity was apparent and repugnance, incompetency, and belligerence attributed to Australia's actions. Consequently, the repulsion framework was satisfied and therefore it can be determined that there was indeed a feeling of repulsion expressed by the Pacific islands towards Australia triggered by its response - or deliberate lack of - to the climate change issue.

Australia's soft power in the Pacific islands failed to force the meaning of their socially constructed world pertaining to climate change onto the Pacific islands, in fact it is now the latter that is attempting to force their meaning of climate change onto Australia. The Pacific islands and in recent years, the Blue Pacific, has discursively constructed representations of Australia that attempts to shape Australia's own preferences as they portray climate change inaction as irresponsible and unintelligible.

The findings of my research pertaining to climate change responses as a source of repulsion is only generalisable in situations where similar conditions are replicated. The conditions in the case study were very specific and unique, and therefore, the scope is limited and can only be reliably generalisable if the same conditions are replicated. These conditions are that the agent is a developed Western country with a significant domestic fossil-fuel industry, or any other industry that is proven to cause great harm to the environment. The client must be a developing country or region that is vulnerable to the ongoing effects of climate change in parallel with, a demonstrated commitment to combatting the climate change issue.

## Repulsion (Theory Building)

Revisiting the newly developed repulsion framework that was proposed at the beginning of this thesis, it can be determined that the framework has successfully assisted in the identification of a feeling of repulsion in the Pacific islands that was triggered by Australia's response to climate change. The framework has been applied to a very specific case study and I would encourage the application of the repulsion framework to a broader range of pertinent issues whether that be responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, attitudes and responses to Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories, or even NATO membership. I consider it relevant and appropriate to use in other cases because it has proven useful in this specific study.

The repulsion framework and the concept of repulsion in general, I believe, can positively contribute to soft power studies as it highlights actions that should be avoided in relations between the agent and client if the agent wants to maintain its soft power presence vis-à-vis the client. The presence of repulsion in the client inevitably means a decrease in an agent's soft power. Repulsion is evidence of power debt attributed to the agent that subsequently affects the soft power dynamics between the agent and the client. If an agent wants to maintain or increase their influence over a client, whether it be wholistically or within a specific policy area, understanding what may be considered repulsive or what has been considered repulsive previously, can be understood to be useful information in policy development.

This of course is predicated on the assumption that there is proven causation between the agent being considered as attractive or repulsive and the policy preferences of the client. Although this idea needs to be further explored and studied, I interpret it to be a reliable and logical assumption to deduce. This makes repulsion a pertinent concept to explore within soft power studies as it can be reliably supposed that eliciting repulsion in the client can have undesirable outcomes for the agent. Eliciting a feeling of repulsion in a client state may not only have policy consequences for both the agent and the client, but also the international community as it may have geo-political implications. This can be substantiated by revisiting Australia-Pacific island relations.

Evident in the discourse by Pacific island leaders were references to China. Australia considers the Pacific islands to be an important geostrategic region that heavily influences the development and implementation of its security policy. Hypothetically, by engendering a feeling of repulsion in the Pacific islands because of its climate change response, Australia risks losing influence in the region to the CCP. An increased CCP presence in the Pacific islands, which can take the form of direct foreign investment, may prompt the Australian Government to revisit their defence strategy in the region.

Sino-Australian relations have become increasingly tense in recent years and the Australian Government has grown anxious about China's increasing presence in the South China Sea and the Pacific islands. It is in Australia's strategic interests that Pacific island nations continue to be friendly and receptive to the security concerns of Australia, as made evident by Schultz (2014, pg.549). But the eliciting of repulsion in the Pacific islands may force the latter to reconsider their security arrangements with Australia if it continues to be unreceptive to their climate security concerns, which in turn may lead to China filling the leadership vacuum in the region left vacated by Australian policy makers.

The causation between repulsion and undesirable outcomes could not be studied in this thesis. It therefore cannot be conclusively demonstrated, but it does prove to be a reliable assumption to make and because of that, the research of repulsion in soft power studies is warranted. In addition, the exploration and study of causation between repulsion and undesirable outcomes requires more scholarly attention. I am under no illusions that the repulsion framework is underdeveloped, so I willingly accept that further development of the framework is required. I strongly contend however that the current framework still proves to be relevant and applicable in identifying whether a feeling of repulsion has been elicited in the client. The repulsion framework is not consistent with a realist or liberalist ontology as it places a heavy emphasis on identity and norms and assumes interests to be endogenous to social interaction.

## Conclusion

A discourse analysis was conducted to identify discursively constructed representations of Australia that were each then subject to a bespoke repulsion framework. Consequently, it was concluded that Australia's climate change response elicited a feeling of repulsion in the Pacific islands as in five of the six representations, the latter perceived the former's actions as either repugnant, incompetent or belligerent. The repulsion framework proved to be successful in identifying a feeling of repulsion in the client and therefore it can be argued with some degree of confidence that the framework would be effective when applied to other bilateral or multilateral issues.

Soft power is a relatively new and underdeveloped concept in International Relations. Historically, soft power has been studied as a two-step process; firstly how it affects attitudes in the client (how attraction is generated) and secondly, how the client's policy makers respond to these attitudes (policy preferences) (Layne 2010, pg.56). My research has focused only on the former but instead of studying what generates attraction, I explored the inverse – repulsion. This concept proved to be a relevant avenue to further explore because there was a gap in the literature pertaining to the concept of repulsion. It had been mentioned in passing by scholars but given very little attention beyond that. The overlooking of the concept by scholars does not indicate irrelevance, as repulsion can be argued to lead to undesirable outcomes, although it has not been conclusively determined in this thesis.

I argue that the concept of repulsion be given more attention in International Relations. Specifically, I contend that the relationship between repulsion and undesirable outcomes should be studied as it is apparent that it can contribute to a greater understanding of soft power. I was not able to explore this due to time and resource constraints, but I see immense value in pursuing it because it undoubtedly has ramifications for the relational soft power dynamics between social actors. This was made clear in the case study of Australia's relations with the Pacific islands in which the former's climate change response was viewed as reprehensible by the latter. The response engendered a feeling of repulsion in the Pacific islands that has the potential to trigger undesirable outcomes for Australia, in a region that is becoming ever more susceptible to geopolitical tensions. Ultimately it begs the question, will the Australian Government see the errors of its ways and change direction, or is it likely that the Pacific islands will pivot inexorably towards China? This is one of the greatest challenges of Australian foreign policy over the rest of this decade and beyond.

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