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**SOUTH PACIFIC SECURITY
AND GLOBAL CHANGE:
THE NEW AGENDA**

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ABSTRACT

In the South Pacific, the end of the Cold War has not been the dramatic turning point in security terms assumed for other regions. It has not created new states or new conflicts or the prospect of new military threats; nor has it meant a 'falling off the map' in the way often assumed in conventional accounts of the post-Cold War South Pacific. The global change associated with the end of East–West rivalry has nevertheless been an important influence on the dynamics affecting societal and human security in the region, however we might define 'security'.

The end of the Cold War removed the nuclear weapons issue as a security question and it has seen the end or reduction of the diplomatic interest of Russia, the United States and Britain, thereby confirming a long term shift away from a colonial order to one in which Asian interests now play a greater part. The most important impact was on the lens through which the international community, and particularly Australia, viewed the region. The new agenda of security issues, around questions of governance, identity and development, was not created by the end of the Cold War; but these longstanding post-colonial processes could be seen for the first time in their own light rather than as part of East–West rivalry.

There is now general agreement on this 'new' agenda providing the main dynamic that affects security in the South Pacific but there are different views about what constitutes threat and solution in relation to it, and whose security is affected. Whatever view is adopted, the social, economic and political organisation of Pacific island countries is central to security outcomes, and the main decisions will be made by people within the region. The global structures and influences both material and ideational will remain powerful but—as seen during the Cold War—there will be a great deal of scope for local agency.

SOUTH PACIFIC SECURITY AND GLOBAL CHANGE: THE NEW AGENDA

Greg Fry

The strategic context in which South Pacific island societies find themselves since the end of the Cold War is often characterised by the contention that the region has 'fallen off the map'. It is an image that appears to have been endorsed by regional institutions, World Bank studies, academic analysts, western states, and many island leaders. It suggests a reversion to 'backwater' status after the high level of international interest in the mid to late 1980s when local developments in island societies could prompt close attention in distant capitals in the search for signs of vulnerability to Soviet entreaty, or fear of losing western alliance solidarity as in the case of anti-nuclear policies. The 'falling off the map' thesis suggests not only that Oceania is no longer viewed as part of any global grand strategy but that, as a consequence, the region is in the process of being marginalised economically because much of the assistance that flowed to the Pacific island countries because of the Cold War will not be forthcoming in the new strategic circumstances. The thesis also embraces the proposition that the post-Cold War trading order will further marginalise island economies if they are not radically restructured. And finally, pictured as 'the hole in the Asia-Pacific doughnut' or 'the eye of the Asia-Pacific cyclone', Oceania is seen as having failed to become part of the new map of Asia-Pacific development (see, for example, Callick 1993; Cole and Tambunlertchai 1993; Bilney 1994).

This perspective, then, posits the end of the Cold War as constituting a fundamental change in regional security. It is a structuralist explanation seeing the global balance of power as providing the main logic underlying regional order and local security dynamics as derivative of that logic. With the lifting of the lid of the Cold War order at the regional level, it predicts marginalisation and economic insecurity for South Pacific states unless they adjust their social and economic organisation to accord with the needs of the global trading and economic structures and the dominant ideologies sustaining them. One prominent variant of the 'falling off the map' thesis, held in Australian government circles, is that in these new circumstances the only remaining power is Australia, and therefore the region is to be seen as an Australian

hegemonic sphere, or post-nuclear testing (from late 1995), as a French–Australian lake.

For many of those propounding this characterisation of the post-Cold War relationship between island states and global structures, the assumed marginalisation is seen as prompting a grim situation for the survival and security of Pacific island states and society. This is captured in the phrase the ‘fatal farewell’ referring to the diminishing interest of traditional donors (Callick 1994a), and also in the ‘doomsday’ projections of the *Pacific 2010* academic project (Callick 1993). It is also present in the World Bank and Australian government characterisations of non-viable and potentially ungovernable states. For many observers ‘the coming anarchy’ would not be too extreme a description for post-Cold War prospects.¹ These characterisations in turn inform policy approaches, backed by aid conditionality, broadly in accord with the governance and sustainable development agendas of the World Bank. It is therefore important to look carefully at this prevailing metaphor for the changing relationship between the South Pacific and global order.

This paper challenges, or at least attempts to complicate, this structuralist characterisation of the security dynamics² of South Pacific security after the Cold War. It posits a more complex interaction between global structures and local political forces and suggests that the end of the Cold War is not the fundamental turning point or determinant assumed in the dominant interpretation. The discussion is developed in five steps. Firstly, it explores the impact of the end of the Cold War on the interests and involvement of large powers, international agencies and corporations to see whether the end of the Cold War is the watershed often claimed and whether it did really amount to the region ‘falling off the map’ and being marginalised in new arrangements. Second, it explores the regional security implications of the changing configuration of global interests, focusing on how we might characterise the relationship among the external interests in relation to their South Pacific involvements. Third, it examines the local political and social forces that are influencing the security of Pacific peoples. Fourth, it examines the role of regional identity and organisation and its relationship to regional security. Each of these first four steps helps us to define the possible and the probable in the security dynamics of the region. The final step attempts a more focused

1 For a less alarmist prognosis see Ross (1993).

2 By ‘dynamics’ I mean the energising forces—ideational and material—underlying perceived security threats and outcomes, and the interaction of these forces.

exploration of the interaction of global structures, regional organisations and local forces in several important security issues in the contemporary South Pacific: economic security; 'good' governance, and environmental security.

The use in this discussion of the contested term 'security' needs some clarification at the outset. On the question 'security for whom?' the argument proceeds on the premise that security for states has to be weighed against, or alongside, security for individuals and groups within states on the grounds that security of states, may not guarantee, and may well work against, security for particular individuals or groups, or even whole societies. Second, with regard to the question 'security from what?' I employ security threats in a broad sense to encompass not only military but also environmental and economic threats and threats of political instability and public and domestic violence. Unlike some mainstream writings, I do not look at environmental threats only to the extent that they affect military security, but in their own right as threats to life. This needs little justification in a region where the survival of several atoll countries is threatened with sea-level rise and where atmospheric nuclear tests have had a fatal impact on some societies and individuals. In relation to the question 'what is being secured?' I do not embrace a broad conceptualisation, of anything that might affect well-being, but a meaning closer to more conventional connotations to do with the preservation of life, and safety, and of a degree of control over existence.

Central to the position taken here is that security is a contested concept, rather than an objective agreed condition that can be revealed through analysis. It is not just that there are different views of what the security problem is and of what approach should be taken; it is that invariably one person's or state's security is another's security threat. It follows that there is not one security dynamic for the South Pacific as is often implied by conventional analyses; there are different and often competing interpretations of the energising forces and the consequences of their interplay.

We have to this point been proceeding as if there is an agreed notion of what constitutes 'the South Pacific'. However, as a political concept its membership and boundaries have varied over time and according to the issue. Even the regional institutional arrangements are not helpful in establishing a fixed idea of regional boundaries. At the core of the idea of the 'South Pacific', however, are the thousands of islands scattered across the central and southern Pacific ocean, some to the north of the equator. They stretch from the Micronesian islands just south of Japan and east of the Philippines south to Papua New Guinea and south-east along the Melanesian chain to New

Caledonia and then east across the Polynesian Pacific to Tahiti. These societies are organised into twelve independent states (Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu), two self-governing territories (Cook Islands and Niue) and the eight remaining territories of France (New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna and French Polynesia), Britain (Pitcairn islands), New Zealand (Tokelau) and USA (American Samoa, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands). It also includes, importantly, the sea around them, up to 200 miles for some purposes, and the high sea 'pockets' within the remaining area, for others. This area, which is recognised as constituting the boundaries of the oldest regional organisation, the South Pacific Commission (renamed The Pacific Community at its 50th anniversary conference in October 1997), is over 30 million square kilometres (not including Australia and New Zealand), or roughly the size of Africa.

In terms of politically weighty decision making, such as treaty-making and collective diplomacy, the South Pacific island membership is a little smaller because they each only recognise fellow independent states. This is the case, for example, in the South Pacific Forum, the other large regional institution. But even here, the regional boundaries seen as relevant for political action include the dependent territories, such as when the organisation takes a collective position on decolonisation in New Caledonia or nuclear issues in French Polynesia. Australia and New Zealand, although members of the South Pacific Forum, do not always put their own territories within the boundaries of the South Pacific. This in/out behaviour is an important variation in what is seen as constituting the South Pacific. Australia, for example, sees itself as part of the Southeast Asian and Indian Ocean regions as well as the South Pacific. But despite its significant region-making initiatives in the other two areas, it is the South Pacific where it sees itself as having a leadership and management role. Finally, for some purposes, and particularly for sovereignty movements and regional non-government organisations—such as the Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisations, and the Nuclear-Free and Independent Pacific movement—the cultural and political identity of the South Pacific stretches to an outer boundary incorporating Hawaii in the north, New Zealand in the south, Easter Island (a territory of Chile) to the east, and Irian Jaya, a province of Indonesia, in the west.

Changing external interests

I contended at the outset that the dominant representation of the impact of the end of the Cold War depicts the change in global balance of power as the watershed event for the security dynamics of the South Pacific, causing the region to fall off the strategic map, and consequently the diplomatic and economic map. There are some major strategic developments which support this thesis. However, there are also indications that the logic behind the pattern of power in the region is much more complex. The region remains on many global maps, not least an economic one. To understand the degree to which we should regard the end of the Cold War as a fundamental turning point, and what outside interests are seeking to be involved in the post-Cold War South Pacific, we explore just where the region is situated in relation to several global maps: that of the nuclear strategist, the military planner, the diplomat, the aid-givers, the traders and investors, the international agency bureaucrat and the International Non-Government Organisation office.

Nuclear involvement

In terms of the grand strategies of the world's largest powers, it was the nuclear issue that made the South Pacific important during the Cold War.³ From the 1940s until 1963, the United States used Bikini and Enewetak atolls, and Johnston and Christmas islands, for atmospheric testing of atomic and hydrogen bombs, and Britain briefly used Christmas Island from 1957 until 1963 for its nuclear testing program until it moved, with the United States, to the Nevada desert. In the same year, France established its *Centre d'Experiments du Pacifique*, and conducted 41 atmospheric tests at Moruroa atoll in the Tuamotus before regional opposition and changing international expectations forced the testing underground in 1975. Moruroa continued until 1995 to be the only place where France tested its *force de frappe*. For the last thirty years, then, this nuclear involvement placed the South Pacific at the very highest security interest of the French government, to the point where its agents were ordered to blow up a Greenpeace protest ship in Auckland harbour in July 1985. For the United States, Kwajalein atoll in the Marshall Islands became the main testing site for anti-ballistic missiles fired from Vandenburg airbase in California, and Guam a site for nuclear weapons storage and for nuclear-armed B52s to be on alert on the runway at Andersen Airforce Base.

3 For details of this nuclear involvement, its impact on island societies, and the regional opposition it provoked, see Firth (1987).

These interests, together with keeping fall-back options for the stationing of ships and planes that might be nuclear-armed, impacted greatly on political developments in Micronesia.

But it was the developments in nuclear policy south of the equator that made regional security of the highest importance for the grand strategy of the United States. New Zealand's prominent refusal to accept nuclear-armed and nuclear-powered vessels and the resultant strains on the ANZUS alliance set alarm bells ringing in Washington. This was seen against the background of significant anti-nuclear feeling throughout the island Pacific and in a significant part of the population in Australia. It was seen not only to challenge the port calls of nuclear-armed ships in the region more generally but also to encourage a 'nuclear allergy' that could undo the global nuclear alliance. And for Pacific islanders the nuclear issue provided the main shared security issue of the post-colonial period.

Against such a background, the impact of the end of the Cold War is significant. It amounts to falling off the nuclear map, at least in relation to weapons. The end of East–West rivalry changed American perceptions of its strategic needs in Micronesia. The nuclear-armed B52s were withdrawn from Guam and the fall-back needs in Palau reassessed, allowing Palau to gain independence under a constitution incorporating anti-nuclear provisions. The testing of anti-ballistic missiles into the Kwajalein lagoon in the Marshall Islands has continued, but as it does not involve warheads or nuclear materials, it has not attracted the same level of opposition. More importantly, in terms of issues occupying anti-nuclear states and groups in the South Pacific, anti-nuclear feeling looked less threatening to Washington after the end of the Cold War. The issue that had most worried the United States, the possible export of the idea of stopping nuclear-armed ships from entering port, seemed to disappear. The United States did not change its 'neither confirm nor deny' policy (despite having removed nuclear weapons from surface ships), but neither did New Zealand's conservative government change the anti-nuclear policy of its social democratic predecessor. In March 1996, Washington signed the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone Treaty⁴ which it had opposed in the Cold War context of the 1980s thereby opening the way for the Micronesian countries to be included in the zone area. In the post-Cold War context it is 'the domino effect' of nuclear-free zones as anti-proliferation measures which is important for US policy.

4 I explore the scope, significance, and the politics of this treaty in Fry (1986).

This dramatic change was accompanied from 1992 by a change in the other major nuclear involvement of the Cold War period: the French government announced a suspension of testing at Moruroa. Over the next three years the nuclear issue disappeared from view. The region seemed to be truly off the nuclear map and relations between France and the region were at an all-time high. But in 1995, President Chirac announced a new series of tests. Although he claimed these would be limited, and the last before France ceased underground testing altogether, the region was outraged. The South Pacific Forum, and Australia and New Zealand, in particular, adopted a series of measures including the withdrawal of France's right to be part of the post-Forum dialogue meetings (see, for example, 'Australia's View' 1995; Keating 1995). The tests ceased at the end of that year and the test sites at Moruroa and Fangataufa atolls were closed down permanently. France signed and ratified the protocols to the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone treaty in 1996, and even before the completion of the tests the Australian Minister for Pacific Islands Affairs talked of the South Pacific as a French–Australian lake in the post-Cold War period (Bilney 1995). The end of French nuclear testing has removed a major security issue for South Pacific societies, although the genetic impact of past atmospheric testing remains a threat to the health of Polynesian and Micronesian populations.

Military intervention

A second area in which we might ask whether the region has fallen off the global map is that of the possibility of outside military intervention. During the 1980s, western security policy towards the South Pacific was predicated on a perception of the possibility of Soviet threat. But this was seen more in terms of the possibility of a military base or access gained through influence rather than hostile military intervention. While part of western propaganda to island elites was to emphasise that the islands were in reach of an air strike from the Soviet bases in Vietnam, it is doubtful that western security analysts actually thought direct military threat to the Pacific islands a real possibility. Their concerns focused instead on the possibility of fisheries access as a cover for future military basing. The end of the Cold War, and the collapse of the Soviet Union, brought an end to this western perception. For western security planners, the region fell off the military intervention map more generally as no likely replacement candidate was seen as filling the void created by the Soviet Union. For island governments, the end of the Soviet Union did not have the same security connotations. While anti-communist, and wary of close involvement with the Soviet Union, they never embraced the Soviet military threat thesis in

relation to the South Pacific (see Hegarty and Polomka, eds 1989; 'Concluding Statement' 1984).

While Soviet military involvement did not eventuate (there was not even a Soviet warship in South Pacific waters during the Cold War) other external interests did intervene: there was French military involvement in New Caledonia to suppress the 1984–85 'troubles' and incursions by the Indonesian military into Papua New Guinea territory in 'hot pursuit' of *Organisasi Papua Merdeka* rebels in 1984 and later. There was also the very real possibility of military involvement by Australia and New Zealand after the first Fiji coup in 1987, the possibility of involvement by Australia in Vanuatu in 1988 during the land demonstrations in the capital, and in the Bougainville conflict in Papua New Guinea from 1989 (Henningham 1995: 137–40). In 1988–89, the Australian government went as far as developing a public rationale for intervention (Evans 1990). Furthermore, over the previous hundred years, in varying circumstances, Australian force had been deployed to the islands: to annex southeast New Guinea in the 1880s, to take Nauru and New Guinea from Germany early in World War I, to help wrest New Caledonia from the Vichy French in World War II, and to re-establish colonial authority in Nauru and Papua and New Guinea after World War II; and to assist in putting down a secessionist attempt at the time of independence in Vanuatu in 1980. However, the experience of the late 1980s has made the Australian government extremely reluctant and unlikely to again contemplate direct intervention. There has been a questioning of the capacity, the ethics and the efficacy of military intervention. The result is a propensity to contemplate intervention only where Australian lives are at risk and with the limited purpose of evacuating Australian citizens rather than seeking to change the political situation. There has also been a developing recognition that such tasks in the region would be better undertaken by police rather than by the military, and by an ad hoc regional peacekeeping force rather than an Australian one.

Although the South Pacific has mainly fallen off the Australian map for direct military intervention, it remains 'on the map' for defence assistance and cooperation. This program is multifaceted ranging from military training and equipping, to the stationing of Australian naval personnel in various island capitals and defence attaches in key cities, to the popular patrol boat program and overflight surveillance of island state exclusive economic zones by the Royal Australian Air Force in order to detect fishing infringements. Where such assistance became controversial is in relation to the Bougainville conflict. For the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF), and the Papua New

Guinea (PNG) government, Australian defence assistance has had too many conditions attached and has, they have argued, forced them to look elsewhere for assistance. For the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) and some other Bougainvilleans, Australian defence assistance has been seen as propping up an attempted military solution to the conflict and thereby making possible human rights infringements against Bougainvilleans. For the Solomon Islands government, suffering border infringements by the PNGDF in 'hot pursuit' of rebels and attacks on alleged rebel supply bases, and even deaths of its citizens at the hands of the Australian-supplied PNGDF, the Australian assistance to PNG has been untenable (see, for example, 'Solomon Islands' 1992). This has led to the paradox of Australian defence assistance to the Solomon Islands government to patrol its border against Australian-supported forces on the PNG side, each in the name of 'security'.

In January 1997, frustration with Australian conditions on defence cooperation (most prominently, the Australian limitations on PNG's battle use of the Australian-donated Iroquois helicopters) and the failure of previous attempts at a military solution to the Bougainville secessionist conflict, led the Chan government to contract Sandline International, headquartered in London, to provide military training and other assistance to the PNGDF (Regan 1997). The arrival in Papua New Guinea of the mercenaries under Colonel Tim Spicer prompted an outcry from the Australian government who saw the introduction of mercenaries for the first time in 'the region' as threatening the norms of a broader regional security, as well as having the potential to escalate the war on Bougainville. The Sandline involvement was also opposed by the acting Prime Minister of the neighbouring Solomon Islands, Francis Saemala. But it was a rebellion by a major section of the PNG Defence Force, sparked by hostility to their displacement by outsiders, which changed the situation. Led by their commander, Brigadier-General Jerry Singirok, they detained the mercenary force and called for the resignation of the Prime Minister, his Deputy and the Defence Minister. Despite Singirok's removal by the Cabinet as commander, the rebellion continued, and the mercenaries were sent home. The soldiers' refusal to serve under the new acting commander and the public demonstrations demanding the resignation of the Prime Minister led to him standing aside for the duration of a judicial inquiry into the allegedly corrupt dealings surrounding the employment of the mercenaries (which quickly became known as 'the Sandline affair'). In the upshot, the Prime Minister, Sir Julius Chan, lost his seat in the June 1997 election. He was, however, cleared of corruption by the initial Sandline Inquiry, but the new government has

initiated a second inquiry with much broader terms of reference (Dinnen, May and Regan 1997: especially chapter 2).

The army reaction and the public outrage were based on the gradual realisation that the intention was that the mercenaries would fight in Bougainville. This was a shaming for the PNGDF. General Singirok directly tapped into a public concern about corrupt politicians while using a popular radio program on the national network. Entering the world of privatised security has challenged some fundamentals about national security and has had significant political consequences. Private security firms are well established in PNG, particularly as an adjunct to mining, other businesses and private home protection (Dinnen 1997). However, the use of mercenaries for state security is not likely to recur as a government-sponsored enterprise.

For the first decade after Papua New Guinea's independence in 1975, it was felt that the most likely military intervention in the South Pacific might be that of Indonesia into Papua New Guinea. This scenario had all the ingredients: a common border difficult to patrol, a West Papuan rebel movement seeking to overthrow Indonesian sovereignty over Irian Jaya which often used Papua New Guinea as a sanctuary, a PNG population generally sympathetic to the West Papuan cause, a perception on the part of Jakarta that it could not rely on the PNG government to patrol its side of the border, and a history of Indonesian preparedness to intervene militarily outside its border, most recently in Timor. Such intervention seemed very possible in 1984 when Indonesian forces did cross the border in pursuit of rebels and when 12 000 refugees sitting in camps just inside the PNG border seemed likely to tempt a strike from Indonesian forces seeing them as potential rebel bases. But since this time arrangements between the Papua New Guinea and Indonesian governments, and their militaries (particularly concerned with toughening up the PNG response to rebel groups), seem to have made deliberate or large scale intervention unlikely (May 1986).

For our broader purpose, what is striking about each of these intervention possibilities during the Cold War, and their falling off since, is that—unlike nuclear involvement—these developments have little to do with the Cold War or its ending.

Diplomatic interest

A third area of inquiry about a possible post-Cold War disappearance off global maps concerns diplomatic involvement and general strategic interest. Undoubtedly, the end of East–West rivalry, and of the conceptual frameworks

associated with it, lowered the level of outside attention to South Pacific developments. The most obvious lessening, if not disappearance, in diplomatic interest was that of the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and, less significantly, Israel. This was most notable because of the relatively high levels of interest on their part just prior to the ending of the Cold War, in the late 1980s. The Soviet Union, after years of trying, had broken through the unofficial ban on Soviet embassies in Oceania, establishing an embassy in Port Moresby in 1988. It closed it three years later, partly for reasons of fiscal stringency. The Russian fishing fleet had also left South Pacific tropical waters by the beginning of the 1990s.

The United States, with relatively little diplomatic interest in Oceania below the equator during most of the Cold War (although it had had diplomatic posts in Suva and Port Moresby since the 1970s), suddenly raised its involvement dramatically in the mid to late 1980s, opening new sub-posts in Apia and Honiara to supplement its Suva post. It also increased economic assistance from a low base and began a more determined effort to influence regional norms and policies on political, security and nuclear issues. In 1990, President Bush called a summit of Pacific island heads of government in Hawai'i, and had proposed a Joint Commercial Commission with the area. Just a year earlier the Solarz report had examined the significance of the area to US interests (*Problems in Paradise* 1990). The subsequent moves to close the new sub-posts, close all USAID offices, and to reduce US Congressional funding for the Pacific Islands Development Program based at the East-West Center in Hawai'i, suggest an almost complete loss of strategic interest south of the equator. North of the equator, however, the US has retained its interest in denying Micronesia to other powers. Britain also signalled a loss of diplomatic interest. It withdrew from the South Pacific Commission in 1995, and wound down its bilateral economic assistance substantially. But in 1997, following the election of the Blair Government, Britain announced in 1997 that it would henceforth 'resume' its membership of the South Pacific Commission (Pocock 1997).

The other powers involved in the Cold War era have for various reasons retained their interest in influencing developments in Oceania. China and Taiwan continue their longstanding interest in competing for the diplomatic recognition of island states (four island states—Tuvalu, Nauru, Marshall

Islands and Solomon Islands—recognise Taiwan).⁵ Each also has substantial fishing interests in the area. Japan has increased its profile with the funding of a Pacific Islands Centre in Tokyo in 1996 and the holding of a summit for Pacific Island Prime Ministers in Tokyo in October 1997 (Finin and Wesley-Smith 1997; *Joint Declaration* 1997). It retains its interest in the marine and timber resources and in the voting weight in international fora of the small island states.⁶ French regional diplomacy has continued as a means of promoting the integration of the French territories with other parts of Oceania, particularly now that the political forces in New Caledonia have agreed to a form of political development which will involve France until at least 2013 (*Agreement on New Caledonia* 1998). At that time, or certainly before 2018, a referendum on independence is to be held.

Australia and New Zealand retain their interest as the larger countries in the neighbourhood. Australia, although closing its diplomatic representation in Nauru as part of broader economy measures, has continued its efforts to support and strengthen regional organisation and to influence the social organisation and economic prospects of the island states. It has moved to a much more unapologetic hegemonic role post-Cold War and is arguably even more involved in the region than during the Cold War. Malaysia has increased a longstanding interest but more as a result of the burgeoning investment in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands by Malaysian companies than as a response to the end of the Cold War. Malaysian timber companies had become very influential in the national politics of Papua New Guinea, and of Solomon Islands (where taxes on timber exports are the principal source of government revenue) (see, for example, Dauvergne 1997). The largest company, *Rimbunan Hijau*, set up one of the two main daily newspapers in Papua New Guinea, *The National*. In Fiji, in a move of enormous symbolic significance, Malaysian interests—MBF Holdings Berhard—took over one of the old colonial trading firms, Carpenters Fiji. This higher profile in regional affairs has been recognised in the invitation to Malaysia to become a partner to the post-Forum Dialogue from 1997.

Also evident as an increasing diplomatic presence are the United Nations agencies, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Asian

5 For the history of this rivalry during the Cold War see Biddick (1989). The Kingdom of Tonga, Taiwan's strongest friend in the Pacific, switched allegiance to the PRC in 1998.

6 For a discussion of Japan's post-Cold War diplomacy in the South Pacific see Tarte (1997).

Development Bank (ADB). The global governance agenda has been vigorously pursued in the South Pacific in the 1990s. International agency discourses of sustainability, good governance, bio-diversity, gender equality, conservation, population control, have all been influential and backed by significant resources. Moreover, the World Bank and ADB have competed in their substantial involvement in nearly all independent island states in the 1990s. World Bank reports in the 1990s have been influential in setting frameworks and normative standards, images and judgements (World Bank 1991; 1993; and 1995), while alternative judgements and images have come from the competing United Nations Development Program with its less market-driven 'human development' approach (UNDP 1994a; 1994b). International NGOs, notably Greenpeace, Amnesty and World-Wide Fund for Nature, have also increased their involvement in the 1990s, both with regional programs of their own and by seeking to influence government and regional organisation agendas.

Overall, one could say that although the South Pacific region has descended on the priority list of all states, now ending up in the desk officer's in-tray rather than on the president or prime minister's travel itinerary as in the late 1980s, there is in the 1990s a more complex array of global actors seeking to influence developments in the area. If one had to generalise then we could distil, with the partial departure of Britain, and the increased diplomatic efforts of Malaysia, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and China, a move away from the traditional colonial order towards a more complex and fluid order with the shift generally towards Asia. The South Pacific has become increasingly attractive to Asian governments and companies as a supplier of resources—particularly of tuna, timber and minerals; its isolation and vast spaces have also been seen as a place for dumping the waste products of rapid industrialisation by Taiwan and Japan in particular, and as a site for a satellite station—on Tarawa in Kiribati—in the case of the PRC. And despite the small size of Pacific states, their numbers do count when it comes to a vote in international organisations. This is not the 'Australian–French lake' of the official Australian imagination, nor a falling off the global diplomatic map more generally.

Economic involvement

A more particular claim of the conventional account is that with the decline in strategic interest after the end of the Cold War, the South Pacific has fallen off the economic assistance map. It is argued that the western powers largely gave

assistance as part of their rivalry with the Eastern bloc and now that that rationale has gone there is a decline of economic assistance demonstrated, for example, by the closure of USAID offices, and British withdrawal. They argue that this has affected assistance to both island states and regional institutions. This position, which is widely held, is open to question. It overestimates the importance of the Soviet Union and the United States in economic assistance during the Cold War. The Soviet Union offered assistance to island countries from time to time from July 1976 but it was never accepted by any government in the region; and the United States came very late to regional economic assistance outside its own territories and the amounts were relatively small. Furthermore, in the post-Cold War period, although the US has closed down the USAID offices, American aid has actually increased to the island Pacific.⁷ The only significant reduction in aid is that of the United Kingdom. And even here, the British Government argues that this is to be seen more as a rechanneling of assistance through the European Union (EU), and that Britain has been a key player in achieving a boost on EU aid to the area.

The other important donors involved in development assistance to the South Pacific during the Cold War have remained, reflecting other motivations that were operating during the Cold War. Japan in fact doubled its level of assistance between 1987 and 1995 becoming, from 1992, the largest donor to the independent island Pacific outside Papua New Guinea where Australian aid remains predominant.⁸ Taiwan and PRC have continued to give economic assistance as part of their competition for diplomatic influence in the region, and the European Union has increased its economic assistance since the end of the Cold War.⁹ France, Australia and New Zealand have also maintained their level of commitment. Overall, far from the region falling off the economic

7 United States Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the South Pacific including Papua New Guinea but excluding the Micronesian entities which are either US territories or associated states with the US, was \$US 3.0m in 1987, \$5.0m in 1988, \$4.0m in 1989, \$3.0m in 1990, \$2.0m in 1991, \$2.0m in 1992, \$3.0m in 1993, \$7.0m in 1994 and \$7.4m in 1995 (OECD 1992; 1995; and 1997).

8 Japan's ODA to the South Pacific excluding Papua New Guinea was \$US 39.6m in 1987, \$43.6m in 1988, \$44.6m in 1989, \$55.8m in 1990, \$46.6m in 1991, \$56.1m in 1992, \$82.6m in 1993, \$75.6m in 1994, and \$79.5m in 1995. Australia's ODA to the same destinations was \$US49.5m in 1987, \$56.8m in 1988, \$68.5m in 1989, \$66.9m in 1990, 62.3m in 1991, 53.1m in 1992, 56.1m in 1993, 65.3m in 1994, 60.6m in 1995 (OECD 1992; 1995; and 1997).

9 Under Lome II (1981–85) economic assistance under bilateral programs to Pacific ACP countries totalled 67, 80 MECU, under Lome III (1986–90) it was 102,20 and under Lome IV (1991–95) it was 109,80 (European Commission 1996: 8).

assistance map, ODA to the independent island states including Papua New Guinea has actually increased since the end of the Cold War.¹⁰ This is the case for ODA to regional institutions as well as to countries. Far from having diminishing resources as often claimed, the regional institutions have had an increased level of funding since the end of the Cold War. The South Pacific Forum, for example, has seen its income double in the period 1989 to 1995.¹¹ Whether for good or ill, for there is a powerful case against the distorting effects of such high levels of per capita aid, the end of the Cold War has not prompted the marginalisation from economic assistance flows which is usually assumed. The other common claim concerning economic marginalisation, that existing island exports will be affected by trade liberalisation under the WTO or APEC, remains an unsupported claim.

The foundation for the notion of post-Cold War economic marginalisation is not only found to be wanting in the case of aid and trade; it also misses the continuing importance of investment. Parts of the region are very much on the global investment map and it is the rapid increase in this investment rather than its absence, which has often caused security issues. The 1990s have seen a doubling of Australian investment in Papua New Guinea mining and an increased investment by Malaysian companies in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Fiji. The important changes in the patterns of investment have had significant implications for economic, political and even personal security, particularly in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and New Caledonia.¹² These changes have not been driven by geopolitical changes associated with the end of the Cold War but by the logic of the market.

Ideas

While we have focused on the external interests and their material involvement in the form of capital, resources, aid, trade access, colonial presence and

10 Total bilateral ODA to the independent South Pacific was \$US424.6m in 1987, \$487.9m in 1988, \$489.9m in 1989, \$514.5m in 1990, \$494.5m in 1991, \$528.6m in 1992, \$467.4m in 1993, \$478.0m in 1994 and \$502.6m in 1995 (OECD 1992; 1995; and 1997).

11 In 1988, the Forum Secretariat's total income, regular and extra- budgetary, was \$Fijian 7.3m, in 1989: \$6.3m, 1990: \$11.1m, 1991: \$12.2m, 1992: \$11.2m, 1993: \$11.9m, 1994: \$12.0m, 1995: \$13.6m, 1996: \$13.5m and 1997: \$12.9m (South Pacific Forum Secretariat 1988/1989 to 1997/98).

12 For a discussion which emphasises the significant geographical limitations of such investment and which argues decreasing interest on the part of Asian companies, see Ross (1996: 136-7).

military power, we need also to recognise the importance of the ideas such interests promote about island life, and the security of island peoples and states. It is here that the end of the Cold War has had its greatest impact. The shift from a Cold War mind frame to a World Bank neo-liberal frame on the part of Australia in particular has been a significant influence not only on Australian policy but on the regional reform strategy pursued through the regional institutions. Island life and societal organisation, whether political, economic or cultural, have suddenly been seen very differently. It was as if as the security crisis of the 1980s ended, a new crisis suddenly began, this time focused on governance and economic issues. What had changed was the conceptual framework through which the Pacific was viewed rather than the material reality. This crisis was said to threaten the very survival of island states unless neo-liberal solutions, involving economic, governmental and cultural change, were implemented. While these are the dominant post-Cold War ideas coming from influential outside interests, there are also other influential discourses concerning sustainability, biodiversity, gender equality, human rights, democratisation, and population control which are also part of the powerful influences on security outcomes in the post-Cold War South Pacific.

The end of the Cold War, then, has had an important, but not determinative, effect on the various global involvements in South Pacific affairs. There are some important changes in the interests and activities in particularly important areas that we can trace to the end of a bipolar balance of power. The most important is the near end of nuclear involvement, at least as it relates to weapons, and a diminished British, American and Russian diplomatic interest south of the equator. But this should not be mistaken for the region having 'fallen off' all diplomatic maps, or for sparking a decline in economic assistance, or for causing marginalisation in a changing trading order. Moreover, the gradual shift to a regional order in which Asian powers play a larger role and the western ex-colonial powers, a diminishing one, is to be seen as a continuation of a trend already under way during the Cold War, although one accentuated by its ending.

The relationship among external interests

The foregoing discussion has suggested who the major external interests are, and the nature of their interest in the South Pacific, and given some sense of the extent and type of involvement. It has also suggested that we are viewing a complex set of entanglements rather than a simple hegemonic system

dominated by one power, yet within that complexity we would have to note both the assertive role of Australia and the general trend away from a post-imperial order dominated by the ex-colonial western powers to an order in which Asian interests become increasingly important. Finally, it has drawn attention to the trend in security thinking in the dominant discourse away from military threat to questions of state breakdown and economic insecurity.

To explore the implications of these changing external interests for South Pacific security we need first to consider the relationship among them. We will later examine their entanglement with local political forces. The most obvious change in the relations among external interests is that since the end of the Cold War they are not based on a fear of military threat or the perceived need to counter territorial ambitions of other powers. From the late 1700s to 1945 and again from 1976 to 1989, the relations among powers involved in the South Pacific were governed by perceptions of the military intentions of other powers—of France, Germany, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, the United States, or Russia. In this respect the close of the twentieth century is exceptional. The only remaining motive of this kind is the maintenance of the US strategic denial policy in Micronesia but this is not directed at any particular power but rather to unforeseen future circumstances.

Most significantly, China has not replaced the Soviet Union as a possible military threat in the minds of other powers as it has in relation to Southeast Asia or Northeast Asia. This is so despite a new and substantial presence of the Chinese fishing fleet in the South Pacific and an active diplomatic and economic presence in the region. The only conflictual relations among powers in their involvement in the South Pacific are those of Taiwan and PRC. While not a military conflict or about taking territory, this contest is about winning hearts and minds. This new situation takes away the high security imperative that often had deleterious effects on the security of Pacific islanders over the past three hundred years.

Given there is not generally a conflictual relationship among external interests, what other generalisations can be made? Is there a relationship among these interests at all? Are there groupings of interests and divisions between them? One obvious candidate for a grouping of dominant interests is 'the West'. As the South Pacific's regional balance of power during the Cold War was often depicted in East–West terms (with France, Britain, USA, Australia, Japan, Taiwan and Israel on one side, and Russia, Libya, Cuba on the other, with China and New Zealand outside the categories as seen in some quarters), it prompts us at least to ask 'what happened to the West'? We might

also expect a western grouping in relation to post-Cold War neo-liberal agendas in both political and economic arenas. 'The West' also has another powerful historical guise in the South Pacific context, as a grouping of colonial and ex-colonial powers.

But against this, we should note that far from the western powers acting in concert during the Cold War, they were at loggerheads with each other. There were major tensions between Australia and New Zealand over ANZUS and anti-nuclear policies, between Australia and France, and New Zealand and France, over nuclear testing and decolonisation issues, between the US and New Zealand, and between Australia and France, Britain and the US over the Australian-initiated South Pacific nuclear weapons-free zone. These tensions, which led to a breakdown in diplomatic relations in several cases, meant that there were in fact several competing 'pro-West' regional orders being promoted in the South Pacific during the 1980s.¹³ Each was seen by the promoters of the others as dangerous to western interests. Thus there is no recent history of a western concert of power even though the Cold War experience in the South Pacific is sometimes represented in this way.

The 1990s has seen the departure of the US and Britain as interested players, and with it, the tension between them and the local western countries, Australia and New Zealand. And, as we have seen, *rapprochement* between Australia, New Zealand and France became possible with the cessation of nuclear testing in late 1995 and France's signing of the Treaty of Rarotonga. As Canberra sees a lessening of outside interest in the region, it sees continued French involvement in the French Pacific as an important adjunct to its own regional efforts. The relations between Australia and New Zealand concerning South Pacific matters have remained slightly strained, first because of differences over the style rather than the objectives of regional economic reform policies, and second, because of New Zealand's successful 1997 initiative in acting as an honest broker in the Bougainville conflict, even though Australia has since been able to commit greater resources to sustain the peace process. If there is a western grouping of interests, it is in relation to the regional economic reform agenda and includes the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, and Japan as well as Australia, New Zealand and France.

The significant long-term shift from European to Asian external interests in the islands region, suggests that the other major candidate for a concert of

13 I discuss these contending perspectives on the preferred regional order in Fry (1993: 229–32).

power is 'Asia'. Even more than in the case of 'the West', however, the collective label should not be confused with common action or interests. As we have seen, China and Taiwan have conflicting interests. China, for example, has opposed Taiwan's right to participate as a Forum Dialogue Partner. As a result, dialogue is conducted at an informal meeting away from the site of the Forum. Taiwan, Korea, China, and Japan all compete in the South Pacific tuna fishery, the largest in the world. Although not directly competing in the way of Taiwan and PRC, one could argue that Japan and China are also keeping a watching brief on each other's areas of influence within Oceania. While there is no common purpose among Asian countries, they are seen by Australia and possibly other western countries and international agencies, as constituting a group in one particular regard, that of introducing a new form of capitalism to the region, with significant political implications. That is, there is an association commonly made in the minds of western observers and some Melanesians between 'Asian capitalism' and the introduction of corruption in the Melanesian states of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands.

Another seemingly plausible characterisation of external relationships is to see, in the parlance of balance of power theorists, a 'unipolar balance', with Australia as the hegemon. Seen in this way, while there may be many and complex entanglements, there is only one that matters in terms of a substantial diplomatic commitment. Certainly, the marked contrast between Australia as a former coloniser, which is a predominantly European society occupying a large continent, with a sophisticated armed force and a significantly industrialised economy, which acts as a donor nation, and the island states, former colonies, which have among the world's smallest economies, populations and land areas, most often without a military force, and which are aid recipients, suggests that the main feature of security dynamics would be one of hegemony. This suggestion is encouraged by the desire of successive Australian governments to assert such a role. Furthermore, for much of the post-colonial period larger western powers have acknowledged Australia as the agent for western interests or a 'gatekeeper' of regional affairs. And in the post-Cold War period, Australian governments have asserted a leadership role in shaping a new regional order (see, for example, Bilney 1994).¹⁴

Such a characterisation overstates Australian influence in the region, and understates the continued interest and influence of others. Australia has had relatively little success in influencing the actual practices of states in areas

14 I examine the attempt to shape a new regional order in Fry (1997).

where it has aggressively attempted to do so, and the imposition of aid conditionality has done little to affect the result.¹⁵ During the closing stages of the Cold War, the failure of Australian influence on security issues—whether to do with the Fiji coups, or denial of Soviet links with the island states—was so marked that it led to the Australian Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans, recognising, at least rhetorically, the need to eschew a hegemonic role and to adopt a ‘partnership’ approach with island states (Evans 1991). In the post-Cold War period, the inability of Australia to significantly influence the main security issue, that of the Bougainville conflict, and to influence governance issues within island states, and particularly Papua New Guinea, suggests that the asymmetry in capacity between Australia and the islands does not translate into hegemonic power. Rather, as earlier argued, there exists a more complex array of outside interests with a complex dynamic among them in relation to their South Pacific interests. Moreover, influential outside interests are not confined to states; they include investors and international organisations.

Indigenous social and political forces

These global interests and ideas form one part of the contemporary dynamic of South Pacific security. A conventional analysis would perhaps say that they in fact constitute *the* South Pacific security order. However, this discussion proceeds on the assumption that the issues, agenda and ideas of island states and societies also continue to matter, just as they did during the Cold War. In the 1980s, the island states were at various times able to prevail on issues of highest security concern to the world’s most powerful states. The preferred orders of these powers, for there were several, were always mediated and contested by local leaders and groups. At other times developments within these societies introduced a set of security issues unrelated to the Cold War (see, for example, Hegarty and Polomka, eds 1989).

A characterisation of the South Pacific experience with indigenous political forces can be gained as much by an understanding of what is absent as of what is present. An observer familiar with other regions would note the absence of a recent history of interstate war, the absence of the capacity, or will, on the part of all island states, to threaten neighbouring states (only Fiji

15 For a discussion of some of the constraints operating on Australian policy see Henningham (1995: chapter 7).

and Papua New Guinea have an armed force of a significant size¹⁶). They would also note that there is no country preparing to defend against another in the region, with the exception of Solomon Islands under the Mamaloni government which, before it lost power, had in the mid 1990s begun to arm to defend against border incursions by the Papua New Guinea forces. Our observers would also note that there is no ideological or other major conflict among any of the fourteen island states. This eliminates the possibility of a good deal of what preoccupies other regions in the name of security.

Turning to security within states, again there is a very different experience from other regions. There are a number of features of the post-colonial Pacific that have made some security issues almost unthinkable and others uncommon. The forceful overthrow of government or suppression of the society by the military is a next to impossible outcome in nearly all island societies. As we have seen, the capacity is simply not there in most societies. Furthermore, there are only two societies where two large groups make up the society. Others are so heterogeneous or so homogeneous that the constitutional system based on majority rule retains its legitimacy. Thus there is an impressive record of constitutional change of government, and leaders accepting such a change, when compared with other post-colonial states. The Fiji case of 1997 is the obvious exception and also Tonga where, under the 1875 constitution, it is not possible to change the executive power of the king. Papua New Guinea is becoming an important grey area where the military has displayed an increasingly powerful role in politics though it has not technically staged a coup (Standish 1997). Separatism and secessionism are also non-starters for much of the region. But in some parts of Melanesia and Micronesia it is a force with security implications for states and societies. Bougainville is the prime example, but there is a longstanding history of 'micro-nationalism' elsewhere in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (May 1982).

Where democratic succession or accountability has not been possible, in Tonga, and in Fiji after the coups, social movements for democratisation have been a prominent part of politics, pitted against political movements of traditionalism which are amalgams of Christian and customary practices (Lawson 1996). In Tonga, this has led to demonstrations, anti-corruption publicity, and demands for change in the political system. In Fiji, it has taken

16 In 1993 the defence forces of Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Tonga had around 3800, 3900 and 350 personnel respectively. Vanuatu also has a small paramilitary force (see Henningham 1995: 26). For a detailed examination of the role of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force see May (1993).

the form of demands for a restoration of democratic practices and rights for non-chiefly Fijians and other races. In each case the issue has been seen as a fundamental security issue; for both sides what is perceived to be at stake is the security of a way of life and the security of individual and group rights. While such politics has led to a military takeover in Fiji and the suppression of the rights of the ethnic Indian section of the population, it has not led to killing or imprisonment. In 1997–98 there were encouraging signs of major steps towards reconciliation around a new constitution requiring a pull-back from the exclusionist line of 1987 and the 1990 constitution (Tarte 1998).

Another important influence on contemporary indigenous political currents is the legacy of colonialism. We should note that the island societies in this region have all experienced colonial rule, or in Tonga's case, colonial 'protection'. This legacy is felt in various tensions over the political organisation of independent states built on colonial boundaries; in the post-colonial relations with Australia; in the differences in the language and cultural identities of the former British, American, Australian and New Zealand colonies; and in the tensions felt in relation to the continuing French colonial presence.

A related feature is the commitment to state sovereignty on the part of the elites. They do not invite external intrusion into their domestic security issues and other island state elites respect this principle. This means that regional security concerns for state elites tend to be outwardly oriented towards the actions of larger powers in the region or to the internal affairs of territories of colonial powers. But this is not necessarily so for non-government groups, such as churches and women's groups, who value a shared identity with islanders across the region and feel empowered to attempt to influence security issues wherever they occur (see, for example, *Proceedings* 1998; *Report* 1996; PIANGO 1995).

These features set up conditions in the South Pacific region for a series of security concerns around the issues of development, colonialism and post-colonial identities, ethnicity, dependence, intervention, hegemony and sovereignty. Taken together with changing global interests, these characteristics also generally rule out most of the major security issues of significance in other areas of the world: military invasion from outside the region, military conflict among the states in the region, border disputes, territorial disputes, military coups (outside PNG and Fiji), genocide, development of nuclear weapons, and conventional arms races.

Regional identity and security

The 'South Pacific' is not simply a convenient scholarly boundary in which we can view distinct security issues in a number of societies. 'The region' has become an important site where the values and practices pertaining to the lives and safety of Pacific islanders, and to the operations of states, are contested. The idea of 'region' has come to be valued as a source of power, a managerial concept, as a lobbying group, as an agent of change, and as a provider of resources. There is a tendency to see a perceived external security threat to one part of the region as endangering the region as a whole. French nuclear testing at Moruroa and Fangataufa atolls, while as distant from some parts of the region as Chinese testing at Lop Nor, was regarded by South Pacific governments and anti-nuclear Pacific societies as part of a collective space. The same was true of the Japanese government's proposal to dump radioactive wastes in the Marianas Trench in the early 1980s, that of the United States government to incinerate chemical weapons at Johnston Island in 1990, and of the Marshall Islands Government to store Japanese radioactive wastes at Bikini atoll in 1996. Each was seen as a threat to 'the region'. For Australia and New Zealand in particular, there has also been a tendency to see developments *within* island countries as linked to 'regional security', a notion that has generally been resisted by the island governments which hold to a strong discourse of sovereignty as part of their notion of security.

Security solutions have also been viewed regionally, but with the same limitations concerning respect for sovereignty. Environmental threats, such as nuclear testing, waste dumping proposals, and driftnet fishing have prompted strong collective diplomatic campaigns. The island states have also responded to a Papua New Guinea request for a regional peacekeeping force in Bougainville in 1994 and 1997, have negotiated regional legal instruments such as the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, and have held regular meetings of police chiefs, customs officers and foreign affairs officials to devise common strategies on drug runners, financial 'carpetbaggers' and organised crime.

Western countries have seen regional organisation as a way of managing security across the island states along lines that suit western interests. In recent years they have been joined by international agencies which regard a regional approach as essential to their reform agendas. Island governments have found regional approaches to be central to their own efforts to counter, mediate or accelerate outside influences on their security broadly defined. Further, non-government groups from what we might call the civil society of the South

Pacific states also think regionally. For example, during the Cold War their efforts to promote a non-aligned and anti-nuclear approach was focused on influencing regional norms and practices (Alexander 1994: chapters 4–7).

Finally, in policy-oriented academia, the large depictions of security issues in economics, security studies and environmental studies contain region-wide generalisations and prescriptions.¹⁷ There is, then, good reason to see normative debates at the level of region and the dynamics of the practices they inform as important influences on the security dynamics affecting particular island societies.

There is a vast and complex array of regional institutions that promote cooperation in most functional areas. Under the rubric of a South Pacific Organisations Coordinating Committee there is the Suva-based Forum Secretariat (that carries out the high-level political decisions of the annual summit of Pacific leaders in the South Pacific Forum and coordinates the post-Forum dialogue with the United States, PRC, France, EU, Malaysia, and Canada), the Honiara-based Forum Fisheries Agency, the Apia-based South Pacific Regional Environmental Program, the Noumea-based Pacific Community focused on ‘grass roots’ development issues, the Suva-based University of the South Pacific, and the Honolulu-based Pacific Islands Development Program focused on research. These agencies, in turn, have spawned a network of regional committees and councils of ministers and officials charged with promoting cooperation in such areas as customs, legal process, policing, fisheries conservation and access management, education, shipping, airlines, finance, economics, tourism, trade, investment, waste management, environmental protection, health and community development.

Regionalism was seen as an important vehicle for promoting a pro-West region during the Cold War. The early efforts at regional economic integration in the 1960s and 1970s were not successful and by the 1980s it was clear that the strength of regional cooperation related rather to collective diplomacy, that is, to the joint efforts of the island states (both with Australia and New Zealand and without them) to influence the relationship of the region with the outside world on a range of security, political and economic issues. This was reflected in the impressive list of regional treaties that appeared in the 1980s.¹⁸

17 For a critique of some of the dominant contemporary region-wide generalisations see Hau’ofa (1994).

18 Nauru Agreement Concerning Co-operation in the Management of Fisheries of Common Interest, Nauru, 1981; South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, Rarotonga, 1985; Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and

The end of the Cold War did not see a change in the significance attached to regionalism by outside interests. Australia, in particular, as the predominant financier of regional institutions maintained a strong interest in a multilateral approach to South Pacific policy. As we shall see below, Canberra governments have seen the regional institutions as central to the promotion of a regional economic reform agenda, its priority foreign policy toward the island region. The more economically stringent post-Cold War environment within Australia did, however, spark a change in Australia's willingness to tolerate what were seen as inefficiencies in the regional institutions. It has wanted greater accountability for the Australian taxpayers' dollar.

The longstanding experience with regional cooperation and regional summitry provides a strong foundation for dealing with issues affecting the security of the region, particularly if the perceived threat is posed by the outside world as in nuclear or fishing issues. It is less successful in dealing with issues within states because of the doctrine of sovereignty that dominates regional deliberations. It can, however, be useful when an island state asks for regional assistance as in the case of PNG requesting a regional peacekeeping force. At the same time, the regional experience has also made evident the main fissures in regional politics that can arise around issues in regional politics. Resource endowments, cultural identity and historical experience make for some differences between Polynesian and Melanesian societies (which are organised as the Melanesia Spearhead Group) on some issues; the very small states also collectively assert, through the Small Island States caucus, different interests from the larger ones.

The interplay of the global, regional and local

We are now in a position to explore the interplay between global interests, regional identity and local forces in relation to particular contemporary issues and its implications for different Oceanic futures. We focus on three: economic security; governance, and environmental security.

Environment of the South Pacific, 1986; Treaty on Fisheries between the Governments of Certain Pacific Island States and the Government of the United States of America, Port Moresby, 2 April 1987; Convention for the Prohibition of Fishing with Long Driftnets in the South Pacific, Wellington, November 1989.

Economic security

As we have seen, the dominant conceptualisation of the security problem in the post-Cold War period, associated particularly with the World Bank and the Australian government, but also with other countries and agencies, has focused on the vulnerability of island economies to the global liberal economic structure (or to globalisation) as perhaps the main security threat for the South Pacific, and economic and cultural reform, together with 'good governance', as the solution. From the early 1990s, this became the basis of conditionality in World Bank and ADB dealings with the island governments, and in Australia's bilateral aid to the region. From July 1994, it also became the basis of an Australian campaign to radically transform the regional economic order through the regional institutions, particularly the South Pacific Forum (see Fry 1997).

In language reminiscent of the Cold War, the new framework speaks of 'crisis' and even 'doomsday' to describe the prospects of the Pacific islands region in the changing economic order if radical restructuring is not undertaken. The main technique whereby security solutions are being put forward is also reminiscent of the height of the Cold War period. All island states, however varied, are reduced to a typical island state, solutions are pursued as a regional reform agenda and the right to manage is assumed by larger states, mainly Australia, and international agencies. The new dominant conceptualisation of regional security, then, focuses on the political capacity of island states, their social organisation and the sustainability of their development practices. The solutions promoted through aid conditionality, World Bank conditions and so on are the familiar approaches elsewhere in the world: privatisation, 'downsizing', liberalisation of trade, transparency, accountability, and management reform.

At the centre of the dominant conceptualisation of the security problem is an ambivalence about the involvement of 'Asian capitalism'. Asian influences have been seen in some influential quarters as the greatest contemporary threat to island state security through their impact on Pacific economies, politics, social practices and the environment, but paradoxically, by the same interests, as the most important way out of insecurity, as a model for change, and a connection that will deliver island societies from marginalisation, poverty and breakdown in the post-Cold War environment. For Australia in particular, as self-appointed manager of South Pacific security, there is a strong ambivalence towards this recent Asian involvement. Australian ministers have cited Asian growth models as the answer for island states, and for Australia itself, if they

are not to be marginalised in the new global economic order. However, the political influence of 'Asian' investors is seen as particularly detrimental to reformist policies (see, for example, O'Callaghan 1994; Baker 1994; Callick 1994b; and 1994c).

This regional conceptualisation of the security problem and solution is contested just as its Cold War forerunner was. While there is generally agreement that the security agenda lies somewhere near the confluence of economic and political organisation rather than military threat, and concerns many of the problems listed in the dominant approach by 'the international community', there is contestation over how to secure Oceanic societies, and for whom and from what. Like the Cold War contestations this can amount not only to different emphases but to fundamentally antithetical conceptualisations. The dominant scenario emphasises acute insecurity for the region, for states and for peoples, if present policies continue in a changing international environment. Others see the solutions proffered by these approaches as threatening the security systems on which Pacific islanders have relied, offering only a gamble on the market in return. A mid way position which provides a view of the strengths as well as the weaknesses of island societies and economies, as well as a suggested approach which builds on this balance is provided by the UN Development Program's *Pacific Human Development Report*, and the *Pacific Human Development Declaration* signed by Pacific islands leaders in 1994.

The regional reform agenda pursued by the Australian government through the South Pacific Forum from 1994 has focused on four strategies: to provide a mechanism of peer review to oversight a set of regional norms concerned with structural reform within each country; to institute a regional timber code as a way of encouraging sustainable practices in the forest industry of Solomon islands, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea; to promote a collective approach to negotiations with distant water fishing nations such as Japan to increase the percentage of total value ending up in Pacific hands; and to rationalise the Pacific island airlines. While the last three had little success beyond a statement of intent, the first has had limited impacts through the deliberations and decisions of the regional finance ministers and economic ministers meetings from 1994 to 1998. These decisions have focused on trade liberalisation, investment codes, and public sector reform.

The reform agenda has had more influence as part of conditions attached to aid and loans to individual countries by the World Bank, the ADB, the International Monetary Fund and Australia and New Zealand, following the

economic and financial crises during the 1990s in Papua New Guinea, Cook Islands, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, in particular. Many of these conditions are aimed at influencing not only the content of policy in the direction of neo-liberal ideas but to affect the implementation of policy, the accountability of policy makers, and the efficiency of delivery. This takes us to a related security issue of governance.

'Good governance'

From the late 1980s, prompted by the experience of the Fiji coups, the Vila riots and the Bougainville conflict, some outside observers began to accept the idea that security issues were not only to be seen through Cold War lenses (see, for example, Hegarty 1987; Hegarty and Polomka 1989). The political stability of these states was seen to be threatened by local factors to do with ethnic identity, separatism, tensions surrounding development, land and resource issues. There was concern about the politics of traditionalism, about the relevance of western institutions and the capacity of the state to maintain order. It was at this time that Australia developed an intervention option. Some Pacific island leaders saw the possibility of such intervention as a major security issue alongside economic vulnerability, dependence and maintaining sovereignty (see, for example, Kotobalavu 1989: 26–30).

This concern with political instability and the capacity of the state faded somewhat in the early part of the 1990s, only to reappear mid-decade as part of the dominant economic security perspective promoted by the international agencies and the Australian government. This perspective has presented a picture of poor governance throughout the region seeing this as an obstacle to economic growth and the proper implementation of the neo-liberal economic package discussed above. It points to lack of accountability, corruption, law and order problems, a failure to deliver programs, and general mismanagement of areas which need to be rectified if investment is to be attracted, and aid efficiently disbursed. It is then concerned with how policy is implemented, and with the efficiency and management aspects of good governance rather than with democratic governance *per se*. These concerns have informed new policies of management reform attached to aid and loan packages.

The increasing focus on governance (see, for example, 'New Focus' 1997; Downer 1997) by the Australian government in particular follows a shift in this direction in World Bank thinking and is further encouraged by frustrations with aid delivery and economic management in the Pacific island countries. But there is also the view that in some cases there is the possibility that this not

only obstructs development but actually could cause the complete breakdown of the state, thus leading to security problems as more conventionally conceived. The Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands experience of political instability is particularly important in understanding how the Australians reached their assumptions about the region as a whole. They are seen to be particularly serious examples of states lacking the capacity or will to carry out policies already agreed by representative government.

In some countries—Fiji and Tonga in particular—the governance issue has been seen by significant sections of the citizenry as ultimately a debate about democracy, about who participates in government and on what terms. Democratic institutions are seen in the new orthodoxy as not only delivering security for various groups currently perceived as being denied their rights but, in the process, as delivering ‘good governance’ in the public policy management sense used by the international banks and the Australian government. Pro-democracy supporters in Fiji and Tonga see corruption and the failure to deliver services fairly, or at all, as a product of the absence of democracy (see Lawson 1996). It is increasingly clear, however, that for some other countries in the region where we find what would normally be regarded as the basic prerequisites for democracy (fair elections, one person one vote, and peaceful changes of government), these have not been sufficient to ensure ‘good governance’ in the sense of effective delivery. In some senses the ways in which politicians respond to local groups (but only a section of their electorate) can be said to work against equitable service delivery. Politicians are electorally rewarded for appealing to particularistic loyalties rather than encouraging civic responsibility.¹⁹

In three states—Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Vanuatu—there is the possibility that rather than the security issue being how to achieve ‘good governance’ while maintaining democratic institutions, the democratic institutions themselves may come under threat, or further threat, from the intervention of the military. Supported in the past in the name of security, these militaries are increasingly becoming involved in the political process (Kabutaulaka 1997). In Fiji, with the memory of the two coups in 1987, the potential threat of military intervention will always be in peoples’ minds. In Vanuatu, elements in the Vanuatu Mobile Force and the police kidnapped the

19 I acknowledge here the ideas of Peter Larmour, Tony Regan and Bill Standish of the State, Society and Governance Project at the Australian National University (for example, Bill Standish’s seminar in the project, ‘Democracy and Governance in Papua New Guinea’, ANU, August 1996).

President of the country in 1996 to force the government to pay outstanding wages (Ambrose and Siwatibau 1997). Despite the subsequent successful arrest of these personnel by the police, the intervention sets up possibilities of such action in the future. Finally, in Papua New Guinea in 1997, following earlier hints of military intervention, the commander of the PNG army forced the resignation of the prime minister. While a general election followed on schedule, and there was no overthrow of parliament, the Sandline crisis at times demonstrated fairly crude military pressure as well as the grey area of influential 'non-intervention', in this case with popular participation in mass demonstrations. Clearly, more active military intervention is now a real possibility.

Fiji's experience with dealing with ethnic identity, governance and democracy issues is at once depressing and encouraging. The resort to military force and the subsequent moves towards entrenching an ethnocracy built on the denial of rights to the non-Fijian population, both Indian and others, represented a low point in balancing the security concerns of different communities within the post-colonial state (see, for example, Lal, ed. 1990; Lal 1988; Sutherland 1992; Lawson 1991). On the other hand, the 1996 Fiji Constitution Review Commission provided a model attempt at coming to grips with the structures necessary to protect the security interests of each community, while at the same time encouraging a wider crosscutting responsibility to the community of Fiji as a whole (Fiji Constitution 1996). It also provided an attempt at promoting democracy without creating the problems for 'good governance' prevalent elsewhere in Melanesia. In July 1997, the Fiji government passed an act promulgating a new constitution based largely on the principles and structures recommended by the Commission but with some important modifications watering down the incentives to move away from communal politics. This constitution came into operation in July 1998.

The Bougainville conflict provides the other extreme case of this set of issues to do with governance (Regan 1998; Wesley-Smith 1992; Claxton 1999). It has been the only serious conflict in the South Pacific in the post-colonial era. Since it began in 1988, coincidentally just towards the end of the Cold War, this conflict between the Papua New Guinea state and secessionist rebels has claimed several thousand lives and at times forced an estimated 70 000 people to leave their homes. The Bougainville Revolutionary Army, led by Francis Ona, demands full independence from Papua New Guinea. Beginning as a local dispute over environmental damage and the distribution of royalties from the Panguna copper mine, the conflict escalated to affect the safety and livelihood of all Bougainvilleans. It also came to influence the way

in which the military conducted itself within mainland PNG and especially in relation to civil government. It has also seriously affected the economy of the country. The security of Solomon Islands citizens in the Western Province across a sea border from Bougainville has been a significant diplomatic dimension.

Throughout the conflict, the Australian government has supported the position of the Papua New Guinea government in seeing the maintenance of the national integrity of Papua New Guinea as not negotiable. It has done so out of concern for a possible demonstration effect within Papua New Guinea and the wider Pacific. The stability of the post-colonial states system of the region is a fundamental premise of Australia's regional security concept. Despite the ambiguities and tensions of the defence relationship, as the main supplier of defence assistance to PNG, Australia has been closely implicated in the conflict from the beginning. As a consequence, Australia's peacemaking activity has been viewed with suspicion by the BRA at least until late 1997.

The latest and most promising peace effort, from July 1997, has eventuated from a mix of unusual developments: the change of government following the Sandline affair, the public revulsion against a military solution following the Sandline affair, the initiative of the New Zealand government to offer itself as honest broker; and the war weariness of most Bougainvilleans—along with a belated realisation in the PNG Government that they cannot win militarily. This resulted in a ceasefire in October 1997, followed by a decision to send an unarmed regional truce monitoring group (from New Zealand, Australia, Tonga, Vanuatu, and Fiji) in December.²⁰ This became a Peace Monitoring Group from April 1998 creating the conditions for the first stage in the negotiation of a political settlement.

Environmental security

A third set of issues on the contemporary security agenda is concerned with environmental security. Natural disasters have always provided the most serious security threat to Pacific island peoples in terms of threat to life, economies and society. In the decade from 1987 to 1997, nearly all Pacific island countries experienced serious cyclone damage. The threat posed by the *El Nino* phenomenon has been demonstrated in 1997 by the severe drought that

20 The latest step in the peace process is governed by the terms of the Lincoln Agreement on Peace, Security and Development on Bougainville signed in January 1998 at Lincoln University, Christchurch, New Zealand, 19–23 January 1998.

has plagued both Irian Jaya and Papua New Guinea. At the end of 1997 there were over 500 000 people threatened with starvation in PNG if assistance was not forthcoming (Allen and Bourke 1997). This threat to food security and water supply became a threat to societal security as people moved to the towns. The drought stopped production at some key Papua New Guinea mines and threatened the water supply and hydro-power supplies of the capital. The lack of an effective response by the PNG state has shown up the way in which poor governance can further threaten security of the people. In normal times the ability of a very high proportion of Pacific populations to provide nearly all of their nutritional requirements through subsistence agriculture, fishing and hunting, would be a source of immense security. But the drought has also shown the vulnerability of this situation to natural disasters particularly when government is ineffective.

It is the human-made environmental threats coming from large powers that have traditionally been seen by island governments and peoples as among the most significant threats to their security. Principal among these have been the threat from nuclear testing and the dumping of radioactive wastes (an issue of the 1980s). But since the cessation of French testing in late 1995, the focus of concern has been the effect of greenhouse emissions on sea level (Connell 1993; Brookfield 1989). The projected sea level rise will threaten the very existence of several island states. The island states accordingly have taken a strong line in their collective position seeking with other small island states, through the AOSIS, a 20 per cent reduction on green house gas emissions over 1990 levels by year 2010. This position has created serious political tensions with Australia, which as the world's fourth largest per capita emitter, is seeking to actually increase its emissions by 18 per cent placing it at the other end of the political spectrum on climate change ('Australia's Greenhouse Bombshell' 1997). The grounds, it claims, are Australia's high dependence on coal for energy generation and export income. To agree to serious limits would it is argued cost the Australian economy thousands of jobs and slow economic growth.

This issue is a priority issue for the Small Island State sub-grouping within the Forum. Their caucusing before the Rarotonga Forum in September 1997, ensured that the issue would be the principal one faced by Pacific heads of government. The efforts of Australia to gain support for a resolution that would not work against its own position to be put before the Kyoto conference on climate change later in the year sparked a bitter controversy between Australia and the island states. Although Australia represented the outcome as a win for

Australia because the final communique did not go against the Australian position, or support the island position, it was a Pyrrhic victory. The ultimate result was an angry and determined island Pacific. The President of Nauru, Kinza Clodumar, subsequently questioned Australia's right to remain as only one of two developed countries in the South Pacific Forum if it continued to display such a lack of commitment to the region ('President of Nauru' 1997).

Conclusions

The end of the Cold War has not been the dramatic turning point in security terms assumed for other regions. It has not created new states or new conflicts or the prospect of new military threats. It has nevertheless been an important influence on the dynamics affecting security, however defined. It removed the nuclear weapons issue as a security question and it has seen the end or reduction of the diplomatic interest of Russia, the United States and Britain, thereby confirming a long term shift away from the colonial order to one in which Asian interests now play a greater part. The most important impact was on the lens through which the international community and particularly Australia viewed the region. It was not that the end of the Cold War created the new agenda of security issues around governance, identity and development but that these longstanding post-colonial processes could be seen for the first time in their own light rather than as part of East–West rivalry.

There is now general agreement on this new agenda being the main dynamic that affects peoples security in the South Pacific but there are different views about what constitutes threat and solution in relation to it. The global influences are ideas about social organisation that have the power of knowledge and are backed by economic assistance. There are also, importantly, flows of capital to develop resources that on occasion challenge the donor's reform agenda. And there are also local ideas and structures that may resist, or encourage, these developments. Some would see resource investment as the saviour for dependent economies; others only remember the conflict which developed around the Bougainville mine or the impact of the Ok Tedi copper mine over an extensive river system. These are complex entanglements that make it impossible to distil one shared view of security in the South Pacific. But the ultimate decisions made about the social, economic and political organisation of Pacific island countries will be made by people within the region. The global structures and influences, both material and ideational, will remain powerful but—as seen during the Cold War—there will be a great deal of scope for local agency.

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