

1-1-2005

South Pacific Security and the Emerging Doctrine of 'Co-operative Intervention': the Pacific way or Howard's way

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Recommended Citation

Allan, Gregor H.: South Pacific Security and the Emerging Doctrine of 'Co-operative Intervention': the Pacific way or Howard's way 2005, 125-144.
<https://ro.uow.edu.au/lawpapers/419>

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Abstract

The end of the Cold war catalysed considerable recalibration in the world's security architecture. In Australia, whilst this entailed a closer embrace of Asia, the South Pacific did not initially engage Australian security interests. However, post 11 September 2001 and post the terrorist attacks in Bali of October 2002, much has changed. The notion of 'comprehensive security'—in which Pacific security is seen as a function of a wide variety of social, political and strategic phenomena—has assumed such prominence it has ushered in an expanded justification for one state to intervene in the affairs of another. Although, as in the case of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands, such intervention has required invitation and multinational coalitions under the rubric 'cooperative intervention', the extent and nature of Australian-led initiatives in the South Pacific has raised concerns. Key amongst these concerns is the extent to which policies such as tied-aid and 'extended cooperation' might erode South Pacific sovereignty and the consensus politics of the Pacific Way. This article considers these issues against the backdrop of very significant changes to the region's key political body, the Pacific Forum. It suggests that although Australia is commendably active in strengthening the Pacific's security net, greater sensitivity to Pacific concerns might better effect her longer-term security objectives.

Keywords

South, Pacific, Security, Emerging, Doctrine, operative, Intervention, Pacific, way, Howard, way

Disciplines

Law

Publication Details

G. H. Allan, 'South Pacific Security and the Emerging Doctrine of 'Co-operative Intervention': the Pacific way or Howard's way' (2005) 1 *Rhizome* 125-144.

the Pacific way or Howard's way?

Gregor Allan CENTRE for TRANSNATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION

The end of the Cold war catalysed considerable recalibration in the world's security architecture. In Australia, whilst this entailed a closer embrace of Asia, the South Pacific did not initially engage Australian security interests. However, post 11 September 2001 and post the terrorist attacks in Bali of October 2002, much has changed. The notion of 'comprehensive security'—in which Pacific security is seen as a function of a wide variety of social, political and strategic phenomena—has assumed such prominence it has ushered in an expanded justification for one state to intervene in the affairs of another. Although, as in the case of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands, such intervention has required invitation and multinational coalitions under the rubric 'cooperative intervention', the extent and nature of Australian-led initiatives in the South Pacific has raised concerns. Key amongst these concerns is the extent to which policies such as tied-aid and 'extended cooperation' might erode South Pacific sovereignty and the consensus politics of the Pacific Way. This article considers these issues against the backdrop of very significant changes to the region's key political body, the Pacific Forum. It suggests that although Australia is commendably active in strengthening the Pacific's security net, greater sensitivity to Pacific concerns might better effect her longer-term security objectives.

126 Introduction

During the Cold war, discourse on Asia-Pacific regional security was premised upon exclusionary assumptions: 'the region' was where the US exercised influence and the Soviet Union did not. Likewise, 'security policy' eschewed positive conditions such as peace, participation or emancipation in the name of mere stability.¹ Unsurprisingly, the end of the Cold War wrought considerable change worldwide - including an attendant proliferation of 'failed' and 'rogue' states. Transnational crime, quick to flourish in the slipstream of globalisation, ushered in an expanded concept of 'security'. Supplanting the hubs and spokes of bilateral alliances that had maintained the *cordon sanitaire* around the Soviet Union grew a raft of multilateral institutions,² mandated to facilitate the attainment of a regional security that could be branded "common, comprehensive and cooperative".³ So too in the Asia-Pacific region, the early nineties brought a significant change in security architecture and discourse. In effecting this new discourse, the attentions of Australian strategic planners initially leap-frogged immediate neighbours in the South Pacific and focused instead upon protecting Australia's strategic interests through engagement with South-East Asia. The medicine for more proximate regional problems was a liberal dose of aid coupled with the "clever management of trouble".⁴

The terrorist attacks in Bali in October 2002, however, wrought a paradigm shift in Australian strategic planning. The security radar of Australia swept more cautiously across the South Pacific. Blips such as the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Fiji came to assume greater significance. Response mechanisms, however, were less clear. As exemplified by Australia's political disengagement from post-coup Fiji, "clever management" had been non-interventionist and had respected the sovereign interests of Australia's Pacific neighbours. Canberra's decision in mid-2003 to promote direct intervention in the Solomon Islands, albeit under the umbrella of 'regional assistance', ushered in a fresh strategic approach to problems of state stability: the doctrine of 'cooperative intervention'.

This paper considers the emergence of 'comprehensive security' and 'cooperative intervention' as pillars of Australian security policy. More particularly, it examines Canberra's connection between the two—as manifested especially by Australia's leading role in the recent intervention the Solomon Islands. It considers also the consequent, and impressive, breadth of Australia's (more conventional) assistance in the law and justice sectors of her Pacific Island neighbours. Finally, and against this backdrop, the future for regional cooperation is assessed. It is argued that, particularly in the area of regional crisis management, the romance of consensus politics, as enshrined by the evocative notion of the 'Pacific Way', is most unlikely

to withstand a stealthy and concerted application of an Australian regional security strategy that already betrays unilateralist undertones and is impelled by the politically crucial imperative of avoiding another Bali. Ultimately, however, a Canberra-driven assault upon the 'Pacific Way' may prove self-defeating.

The emergence of comprehensive security

In the early to mid-nineties, 'security' came to entail two central propositions: (i) that security depends principally not upon countering military threat but upon creating 'human security'—a notion that encompasses respect for human rights, the protection of the environment, provision of employment and brighter prospects for future generations;⁵ and (ii) that effecting such security requires a multilateral, cooperative approach—one that sits outside alliance structures and espouses the 'soft' politics of confidence building measures and preventive diplomacy.⁶

Even adorned with modifiers such as "cooperative" and "comprehensive", security in the Asia-Pacific has remained steadfastly dominated by the realism of state self-interest.⁷ This is perhaps unremarkable as, despite its failures, the nation state is the "most pervasive and effective form of exclusion in world politics"⁸ and is seen as the only vehicle capable of providing any form of regional security. As the Australian Prime Minister has only recently noted, this especially true today:

Despite all we know about the importance of non-state actors in the international system, the nation state remains the focus of legitimate action for order and justice in our world. September 11 returned the state to centre-stage for the oldest of reasons—the provision of security.⁹

Until recently, the islands of the South Pacific had been largely divorced from this new security discourse. Australia, clearly the major regional power, chose to focus primarily upon South-East Asia in terms of both security and trade.¹⁰ The South Pacific Forum's 1992 Honiara Declaration on Law Enforcement Cooperation did, however, note a need for a "more comprehensive, integrated and collaborative approach" to "threats from criminal activities" and mandated the Forum Regional Security Committee to, *inter alia*, "establish a framework for increasing contacts amongst specialist agencies".¹¹ In 1997, this bedrock declaration was followed by another: the Aitutaki Declaration on Regional Security Cooperation. Reflective of the new discourse, the Aitutaki Declaration commenced with the express observation that "an adverse law enforcement environment could threaten the sovereignty, security and economic integrity of Forum members and jeopardise economic and social development". A need was identified for a "more comprehensive approach

to regional security consistent with the relevant principles of the United Nation's 'Agenda for Peace'. Principles of 'good governance', 'international cooperation' and 'preventive diplomacy' were espoused.

Similar sentiments carried through to the Biketawa declaration of 2002 which recognised the "vulnerability of member countries to threats to their security, *broadly defined*, and the importance of cooperation among members in dealing with such threats when they arise" (emphasis added). The Nasonini Declaration on Regional Security followed in 2003 and served to underscore the "heightened threat to global security" following the attacks of 11 September 2001, "in particular those posed by international terrorism and transnational crime". It exhorted member states to enact appropriate legislation, including anti-money laundering legislation, and to "develop strategies to combat serious crime".

Post-September 11 and post-Bali, Australia is very much a part of this emergent security discourse. This is perhaps unsurprising. On 12 November 2002—exactly one calendar month after the devastating attacks in Kuta, Bali—Al Q'aeda leader Osama Bin Laden announced (via videotape released in the United Kingdom):

We warned Australia before not to join in in Afghanistan, and against its despicable effort to separate East Timor. It ignored our warning until it woke up to the sounds of explosions in Bali. Its government falsely claimed that they were not targeted.¹²

Unsurprisingly, Australian Minister of Defence, Robert Hill, now speaks of the "dangers of trying to draw a line around Australia's strategic interests":

...regional terrorism, global security and the defence of Australia in this new strategic environment are very much the same thing.¹³

Identified in the 1997 Aitutaki Declaration and seen ever since as an increasingly integral precondition to comprehensive security is the notion of 'good governance'. Indeed, under the Biketawa Declaration, 'good governance' was pitched alongside democracy as a "Guiding Principle" to which member states considered themselves committed. Good governance itself was defined as "the exercise of authority (leadership) and interactions in a manner that is open, transparent, accountable, participatory, consultative and decisive but fair and equitable". Although this definition is silent on appropriate economic policy, where the only two regional powers—Australia and New Zealand—both ardently pursue free-market agendas, notions of 'good governance' are apt to connote the implementation of neoliberal reform. Indeed, Australia has already announced her intentions to place a "strong focus" on the "economic and financial management" of her Pacific neighbours.¹⁴

This is not of purely fiscal interest: in considering threats to the security of the region, “broadly defined”, the Aitutaki Declaration lumps “economic policy” in with nefarious phenomena such as drug trafficking and natural disasters as “the most immediate risks to security in the region”.¹⁵

The emergence of cooperative intervention

The Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) commenced on 24 July 2003 and attested a “paradigm shift in Canberra’s strategic thinking”.¹⁶ The decision to intervene closely followed the June 2003 release of an Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) report entitled “Our failing neighbour: Australia and the future of Solomon Islands”. The report urged a “sustained and comprehensive multinational effort” led by Australia and consented to by Honiara. The report acknowledged that such intervention would “take us across a major threshold, and challenge the foundations of our policy in the Southwest Pacific, which involves providing countries with aid, but expecting them to solve their own problems”.¹⁷ In a supportive launching of the report, Australia’s Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, announced that Australia will not “sit back and watch while a country struggles”.¹⁸ He added:

Direct engagement, including security assistance, might be needed. Such engagement would involve cooperative intervention—working with and at the request of the relevant government, together with other partners in the region.¹⁹

Yet Australia had for years refused requests for assistance by the Solomons. Indeed in January, only five months earlier, Mr Downer had declared:

Sending in Australian troops to occupy the Solomon Islands would be folly in the extreme. It would be widely resented in the Pacific region. It would not work, no matter how it was dressed up.²⁰

Although the Foreign Minister sought to explain this *volte-face* on the basis that earlier intervention would have pre-empted the peace process and entailed “imposing an external solution by force”,²¹ Canberra’s earlier position was in fact entirely “consistent with its previous ‘indigenous solutions’ policy approach” and was “based on the calculation that Australia’s interests were not sufficiently engaged to warrant direct police or military intervention”.²² This was reflective of a broader antipathy in which South Pacific regional politics was seen merely as a matter of “cleverly managing trouble”.²³

The success of the Australian-led INTERFET operation in East Timor “doubtless

played a part in fostering Canberra's attitude change"²⁴ By July 2003, Canberra understood that Australian-controlled "multilateral" operations could provide effective delivery vehicles in an emerging, interventionist climate.²⁵

Conventional security cooperation

Despite suggestions in the 2003 Australian Foreign Affairs and Trade White Paper that "Australia cannot presume to fix the problems of the South Pacific countries", that "Australia is not a neo-colonial power" and that "the island countries are independent sovereign states", Australia is intensely involved in strengthening the region's comprehensive security net.

In PNG, Australia is undertaking an 'Enhanced Cooperation Program' (ECP). The ECP comes on the back of long-standing attempts at extensive sector reform programmes in PNG (costing some A\$60 million) and in Fiji. As originally announced in December 2003, the programme required PNG to accept 230 Australian Federal Police (AFP) and around 80 bureaucratic 'advisers' as officers of the PNG state, including even an Australian replacement for the PNG Solicitor General. Not surprisingly, the leaders of PNG saw this intensified relationship as problematic and negotiations over the ECP dragged through to June 2004. Today, the program has been formalised by way of an addition to the overall Australia-PNG treaty. The AFP deployment—by far the most significant aspect of the ECP—currently stands at 125: 106 in Port Moresby and a further 19 in Bougainville.²⁶

In Indonesia, Australia is implementing both a A\$10 million counter-terrorism initiative and a A\$3.5 million anti money laundering programme.²⁷ It is undertaking ongoing work to help improve the capacity of the Samoan and Vanuatu police forces.²⁸ In August 2003, Prime Minister Howard presented the Pacific Islands Forum with a Pacific Regional Police Initiative auguring the establishment, in Suva, of a training centre capable of developing a 'regional police force' at the rate of 900 officers per year.²⁹ Australia has also helped to establish 'Transnational Crime Units' in the police forces of Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea.³⁰ A Solomon Islands unit is slated for launch mid this year.³¹ These units have not only key intelligence-gathering functions but are primary operational institutions in policing transnational crime.³² In April 2004 the Australian Federal Police 'Law Enforcement Cooperation Programme' established a Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre in Suva. This will constitute a regional hub linking the national Transnational Crime Units—again for both intelligence sharing and operational purposes. More recently still, in July 2004 the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC) was officially opened pursuant to a joint initiative between the Australian and Indonesian governments. The Centre's objective is to enhance the operational expertise of regional law enforcement

agencies in dealing with transnational crime. Australia and Indonesia also co-chaired a Regional Ministerial Meeting on Counter-Terrorism in Bali in February 2004—a meeting that “produced concrete outcomes in the critical areas of law enforcement, information sharing and legal frameworks.”³³

Consistent with Canberra’s move towards ‘tied aid’, the cooperation model effected by Australia throughout the region is no longer one of long-term financial assistance but one in which ‘key personnel’ are inserted into the law and justice structures of Pacific states.³⁴ An examination of the nature of some of these key positions similarly bears out the emphasis now placed upon good governance. The ‘Special Coordinator’ to RAMSI is an Australian. Australia funds the positions of Police Commissioner and Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions in Fiji. On 29 October 2004, Australia deployed to Nauru two senior police officers to fill the roles of ‘Director of Police’ and ‘Special Police Adviser.’³⁵ An Australian is likely to replace the outgoing British police commissioner of the Solomon Islands.³⁶

“Big Brother”? tied aid and interventionism

At the launch of the ASPI report, Australia’s Foreign Minister carefully imbued his “struggling neighbour” speech with liberalistic vernacular:

I was in Solomon Islands late last year and the human cost of this trouble is obvious. There are high numbers of unemployed young people wandering the streets. Children are not receiving the education they need because teachers are not being paid on time and schools lack sufficient funding. Without donor help, there would be no health services in the provinces. Last month there was another tragic incident involving the murder of an Australian missionary. Economic activity will not revive without an improvement in law and order.³⁷

Yet in a separate report published only a few months later, the author of the “failing neighbour” report, Elsinä Wainright, graphically laid plain Australia’s own security interests:

Failed or failing states are often petri dishes for transnational criminal activity such as money laundering, arms smuggling, drug trafficking, people trafficking, and terrorism.³⁸

The report also identified a wider strategic dimension to Australia’s security interests: a bankrupt Solomons would have provided potential for a foreign power to establish influence in the region.³⁹ Prime Minister John Howard was

also less altruistic in his justifications, stating that a “failed state” could become a “haven for terrorists, drug-runners and money-launderers”.⁴⁰ Presaging the AFP’s expanded role in implementing interventionist Australian policy is the creation of the 500-strong AFP ‘International Deployment Group’ to “strengthen Australia’s involvement in peace-keeping operations, missions to restore law and order, and the delivery of capacity-building initiatives in the region”.⁴¹ More dramatically, at the time of the Bali attacks, the Prime Minister gave a warning that, in future, Australia might take pre-emptive action against terrorist bases in other countries.⁴²

Canberra has also sought to tie its provision of aid to the region. At the Forum Leaders’ Special Retreat in Auckland in April 2004, Mr Howard announced that “increasingly in the future Australia will be saying as a condition of aid that corruption must be eliminated”.⁴³ This is a very significant flexing of power: per capita, the South Pacific receives more aid than any other region in the world⁴⁴—the lion’s share coming from Australia.⁴⁵ Unsurprisingly, Mr Howard’s comments met with indignation from other leaders—Fiji’s Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarase, retorting (somewhat emptily) that “Fiji also has the right to choose whether we accept the aid as an independent and sovereign state”.⁴⁶ Express demands upon PNG to either deal with corruption or lose aid prompted Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare to suggest that Australia could not form a government of 1000 tribes whereas “we have made a success of it”.⁴⁷ Australian aid constitutes one fifth of PNG’s budget. PNG ranks 118th out of 133 countries in Transparency International’s ‘corruption perceptions index’.⁴⁸ As evidenced by the ECP, continued protestations from Port Moresby unsurprisingly rang hollow in Canberra.⁴⁹

A thirty-year track record of failed aid policies for the Solomon Islands provided a further catalyst for RAMSI—the ASPI “failing neighbour” report asserting that the provision of further aid would have, at best, a “palliative” effect.⁵⁰ This emerging, avuncular policy shift was soon applicable to the entire South Pacific. Following the launch of RAMSI, Prime Minister Howard stated that RAMSI could lead to “pooled regional governance” among island states that are “too small to be viable”.⁵¹ In October 2003, Alexander Downer announced that “in the rest of the region our engagement will be based on an increasingly robust dialogue on reform” and that “governance is now at the centre of all our programs in the region, with a strong focus on law and order and economic and financial management.”⁵²

“Robust dialogue” is also employed to propel neoliberal economics through the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER). Concerns are frequently voiced as to the effects of PACER upon small island nations too under-resourced to properly analyse the long-term ramifications of reciprocated free-trade. Some

accounts of the initial negotiations in the formulation of that agreement also “reveal a pattern of arrogance and intimidation that was led by Australia and condoned, and sometimes mirrored, by New Zealand”.⁵³

In August 2003, an Australian parliamentary inquiry into relations with the Pacific reported regional disapproval at Australia’s “big brother” approach.⁵⁴ This disapproval has also been noted by many writers and eminent commentators. Back in August 2000, prominent Pacific affairs analyst Professor Ron Crocombe commented that “naïve and patronising lectures, postures and threats from political leaders are losing Australia and New Zealand support throughout the region”.⁵⁵ Doubtless, Alexander Downer’s refusal to apologise over the recent diplomatic debacle that saw the next Forum Chair, Sir Michael Somare, being required to remove his shoes in a security check at Brisbane airport will do little to assuage these perceptions of arrogance.⁵⁶

The future for cooperation

The future of political consensus and true cooperation will turn upon the effectiveness of the Pacific Islands Forum as a voice and vehicle for genuinely multilateral action. The Forum’s Auckland Declaration, reached at the Leaders’ Special Retreat in April 2004, asserts that the “key goals” of the Forum are “economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security” and that “these goals should form the principal focus of the Forum and its Secretariat”. These goals are products of a greater “vision” of a “Pacific region that is respected for the quality of its governance, the sustainable management of its resources, the full observance of democratic values, and for its defence and promotion of human rights”. The vision itself is the first step in implementing recommendations made by an ‘Eminent Persons Group’ (EPG) in a wholesale review of the Forum and its secretariat. The EPG review notes that the Pacific is facing “considerable challenges” and that overcoming them will require action “not only by national Governments but also at the regional level”. It calls for a ‘Pacific Plan’ for “intensified regional cooperation” that envisages “the pooling of regional resources in a range of areas of governance”, including the area of “regional law enforcement aimed at trans-national crime”:

It might be possible to consider introducing a regional panel of judges, a common list of Pacific prosecutors, a regional shipping registry, a regional financial intelligence unit...⁵⁷

Success, the report posits, “involves a redefinition of the traditional ‘Pacific Way’ of doing things”.

In urging “intensified cooperation”, the report expressly recognises that “trans-national and regional security issues are seen by many in the region as likely to dominate Forum attention for at least the next few years.”⁵⁸ From a security cooperation perspective, a review of the Forum along the lines contained in the EPG report is sensible lest the Forum’s declarations end up as “empty frameworks of cooperation.”⁵⁹ The 1997 Aitutaki Declaration, although noting that “existing arrangements” had failed to provide mechanisms that would “enable members to respond promptly and effectively to requests for assistance”, failed to augur a greater role for the Forum or its secretariat in policy creation and implementation, presaging instead some future agreement by Forum leaders to develop procedures to “better facilitate responses by the region’s disciplined forces”. The Biketawa Declaration, in dealing with the highly salient issue of regional emergency management, paradoxically gives “a ritual bow”⁶⁰ to state sovereignty by expressly noting the essentiality of “respecting the principles of non-interference”. In short, “the so-called ‘Pacific Way’ [has been] a variant of the ASEAN Way in Pacific garb.”⁶¹

Implementation of the Pacific Plan will clearly vest greater prominence and power in the Forum Secretariat. Indeed, the EPG recommends “a new Agreement that updates and clearly sets down the role, functions and responsibilities of the Secretariat” as well as the appointment of a second Deputy Secretary General. It also underscores the “principal functions” of the Secretariat: policy advice, coordination and implementation of leaders’ decisions, “rather than the project implementation and technical assistance functions that it has acquired over the years”. Paradoxically, a huge amount of this “project implementation and technical assistance” is in the law and justice sector, particularly through legislative reform and capacity building in the area of transnational crime prevention and counter-terrorism. The integral role of the Secretariat in these areas and the absence of an obvious alternative make it difficult to believe that the Secretariat will relinquish these functions in the near future.

Although the EPG has recommended that the Forum “mainstream” the concerns of “vulnerable Small Island States” into its work, there is concern that the Pacific Plan could prove a “Trojan horse that propels [Australia’s neoliberal] agenda into the heart of the Pacific.”⁶² To the extent that the agendas can now be separated, the same horse would, of course, propel Australia’s ‘cooperative intervention’ security agenda. Indeed, there are signs that these early processes of reform have already been exploited. At the Forum Leaders’ Summit in 2001, Australia initiated the removal of the requirement that the Secretary General come from a Small Island Nation. At the following year’s Summit, it succeeded in ousting the unwritten convention of appointment by consensus, replacing it with a written

election process. To complete the trifecta, in 2003 it secured the election of an Australian, Greg Urwin, as Secretary General. Moreover, the election itself was attended by “two days of haggling”⁶³ and allegations of Australian interference.⁶⁴ These developments are all the more significant as the Pacific Plan envisages a radically expanded role for the Secretary General in “setting Forum agendas and coordinating responses by members to regional events, particularly crises.”⁶⁵ Although such action must be taken in close consultation with Leaders, the Secretary General is nevertheless projected to exercise executive function and “to take a proactive role.”⁶⁶ Pacific-wide ownership of the Forum is now seen as being at risk:

This sense of ownership has been eroded in recent years as economic, political and security initiatives of the Forum seem to be increasingly driven by Australia and New Zealand (who also control the purse strings). The appointment of an Australian to the Secretary General position will make it harder to reverse this trend, especially if he is expected by his sponsors to be more proactive and lead a major overhaul of the organization.⁶⁷

The EPG review itself is not above allegations of partisanship: it evolved from a review of the capacity of the Forum to “meet a rapidly expanding array of demands” into “a review of the Forum itself.”⁶⁸ The EPG’s Reflection Group members were predominantly New Zealanders. New Zealand trade officials helped write the final report. This implicates Australia as there is a strong perception that “Wellington plays London to Canberra’s Washington.”⁶⁹ Indeed, the report’s references to “the pooling of regional resources in a range of areas of governance” so as to “offer improved efficiencies” is uncannily reflective of comments by the Australian Prime Minister’s to the effect that RAMSI could lead to “pooled regional governance” among island states that are “too small to be viable.”⁷⁰

A revamped Forum headed by an Australian with a proactive mandate to coordinate responses “to regional events, particularly crises” fits neatly with Australia’s existing plans. In February 2004, ASPI released a report on the Australian Government’s increasing use of Australian Federal Police to preserve regional security, noting that more than 7% of AFP personnel are deployed overseas.⁷¹ Initiatives such as these, the creation of the AFP ‘International Deployment Group’ and the Pacific Regional Police Initiative reflect the views expressed in the 2003 Australian Senate Committee Report that “preventing state decline is cheaper than allowing states to deteriorate.”⁷²

Although RAMSI has produced a political environment capable of sustaining

effective government, Australia's "proactive role in advancing intervention"⁷³ and in "cobbling together"⁷⁴ the consensus required by its doctrine of cooperative intervention has raised concerns. Indeed, allegations have been made that although "dressed up as a Pacific Islands Forum project at the invitation of the Solomons Government", the reality was that "the landing date was set and forces put into motion three weeks before the paperwork was done."⁷⁵ Under the proposed Pacific Plan it will be the Australian Secretary General, Mr Urwin, who will have the moral and executive mandate to steer future interventions. So long as the hands on the reins remain Australian, however, to many the horse itself will appear suspiciously Trojan. Moreover, Australia's firm grip on the region's law and justice sectors, the immense importance of Australian aid to the region and Canberra's demonstrated preparedness to tie its provision to 'good governance' will certainly provide leverage when both 'requests' and 'consensus' are considered necessary.⁷⁶

Several academics are critical of not only the processes but the interventionist, "panic-driven" responses themselves. At an inter-sessionary 'panel discussion' on "Challenges to Governance in the Pacific" at this year's FRSC meeting in Fiji, Dr Sinclair Dinnan of the Australian National University challenged the appellation "failed state", remarking that it falsely presumes a previously "functioning state" (as opposed to one long beleaguered by inappropriate institutions inherited from former colonial rule) and posits a false notion that imposing (urbanised) government from "the top down" is the only appropriate model.⁷⁷

The Pacific Way? more carrot—less stick.

In announcing Australia's emergent 'cooperative intervention' policy in his "struggling neighbour" speech, Alexander Downer saw multilateralism as essential. However, the successes of INTERFET and RAMSI have led to more US vernacular and increased talk of 'coalitions of the willing'.⁷⁸ Such triumphs have their dangers:

Such strikes [RAMSI] can have a certain seductive attraction. Unless the terms of such interventions are clearly spelled out and are fully understood by the wider international community, they can do unintended damage to the established substructure of regional diplomacy and important bilateral relations. Once delegitimised, the delicate multilateral balance, painstakingly constructed in the aftermath of World War Two, would be difficult to repair.⁷⁹

Indeed, in a radical bid for pre-invasion support to the United States in the war

in Iraq, Australian Prime Minister John Howard suggested changing the United Nations Charter to allow “pre-emptive self-defence”.⁸⁰ Unsurprisingly, many are now concerned at the potential breadth of the Howard / Downer doctrine of cooperative intervention:

The same principle, if unchecked, could end up being an Australian version of a la carte multilateralism, where multilateral collaboration serves as little more than a highly selective enterprise for advancing Canberra’s interests, quite possibly at the expense of those of the region as a whole. If so, the Forum process could well be undermined should Australia succumb to the temptation for which America, in its post-9/11 intolerance, seems to have fallen. In this regard, Australia’s announced intention to regard multilateral action as less effective than coalitions of the willing raises troubling questions.⁸¹

John Howard’s recent Lowy Lecture on “Australia in the World” will have done little to assuage concerns of “a la carte” policy formulation:

Challenges near and far demand a sense of balance and flexibility in our policy approach. Just as the national interest is not static, nor should our global engagement be hostage to yesterday’s conventional wisdom. Just as our country prospered from the fresh eyes Frank Lowy brought to a world of opportunities, so each generation of Australians must look anew at the eternal pursuit of our country’s security and prosperity. We have learned that, if we make the right choices, Australians can shape our environment and our destiny, not simply be takers of trends set elsewhere. We have learned that global engagement is demanding work requiring large resources, great stamina and reserves of patience. And it can only be sustained through constant dialogue with the interests and instincts of the Australian people.⁸²

Australia’s own ‘comprehensive security’ needs and the regional leverage she gains in its pursuit augur magnificently for future Canberra-driven regional cooperation initiatives. As the government itself states: “Our objective is to achieve practical results that improve the overall security of the region and protect Australian interests in the process.”⁸³ Less certain is whether the Pacific Island ‘recipients’ of this ‘cooperation’ will be able to heed the exhortations of that visionary Fijian leader, the late Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, by retaining “firm control of their destinies”. This of itself is unremarkable: Australian tax-payers can reasonably expect their government to be dutiful in its administration of foreign

aid - particularly as liberal approaches have consistently failed. For those states largely sustained by Australian aid, such as PNG, a stiff dose of realist policy is not only to be expected but, arguably, required. Similarly, as attested by the self-congratulatory atmosphere during the 'RAMSI update' to the 2004 Forum Regional Security Committee meeting, RAMSI is apt to be hoisted aloft as a truly regional success, notwithstanding the backroom "haggling" that attended its inception.

Prognoses for future cooperation, however, turn as much upon politics as policy. Institutions that enable region-wide resource-sharing, as so openly espoused by John Howard, require a political climate that conduces cooperation. Unfortunately, where political climate matters most—in the Forum itself—Australia is wide open to allegations of gross manipulation.

Such allegations matter. The Forum's Pacific Plan will challenge Pacific Island leaders to be brave in reformulating notions of sovereignty. As Samoan Prime Minister and current Forum Chair, Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, observed at the Forum Leaders' review of the Plan only this March, "in a globalised world none of us can remain an island... Over the next few years we will need to explore how far we can take our sense of shared sovereignty, and shared responsibility, in our pursuit of regionalism".⁸⁴ These are early days for the Pacific Plan. Success at this delicate stage will require not only Pacific confidence in the Forum, its secretariat and its processes but also a climate of persuasion—not provocation. An Australian foreign policy that purports to flex "through constant dialogue with the interests and instincts of the Australian people" certainly cannot be sold through process manipulation and "naïve and patronising lectures" that only antagonise the already exposed nerve-ends of Pacific sovereignty. For all that change may be required, the Howard government would do well to note that the 'Pacific Way' is less about what is done than *how* it is done.

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- ⁴ Dobell, G., 2003. The South Pacific—Policy Taboos, Popular Amnesia and Political Failure, paper delivered to the Menzies Research Centre, Canberra, 12 February.
- ⁵ See, as an example of commentary on the issue from this period, Bedelski, R., 1992. Unconventional security threats: An overview, North Pacific Cooperative Security Dialogue Working Paper No.11, York University, North York, cited in Capie, D. (*op. cit.* fn 1).
- ⁶ Evans, G., 1993. *Cooperating For Peace: The Global Agenda for the 1990s and Beyond*, St Leonards 5.
- ⁷ 'Multilateral' security institutions such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference permit only state participation and defer respectfully to principles of sovereignty under the principle of "unanimous compromise" (a term coined in 1975 by the then Cook Islands' Prime Minister, Albert Henry). Even CSCAP (the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific) is said to be "primarily an instrument for the development of state-centric security policy", despite its promotion of 'second-track' dialogue involving academics, analysts and government officials: see Capie, D., *op. cit.* fn 1.
- ⁸ Linklater, P., *The Question of the Next Stage* 83 (cited in Capie, D., *op. cit.* fn 1).
- ⁹ Howard, J., 2005. *The Lowy Lecture on Australia in the World*, lecture delivered at the Lowy Institute, Canberra, 31 March.
- ¹⁰ From the mid-1970s, successive Australian governments shifted their focus towards the country's rising South-East Asian neighbours, seeking to strengthen economic and political ties with them and playing down Australia's traditional colonial ties: Advance, Australia Fair, *The Economist*, 10 July 2003. For a fuller account, see: Fry, G., 1993. At the Margin: The South Pacific and Changing World Order in Leaver, R. & Cotton, J. (Eds.), *The Post Cold War Order: Diagnoses and Prognoses*, Sydney 234-236.
- ¹¹ The declaration also noted the "important work" already being carried out by several of those "specialist agencies", such as the Pacific Islands Law Officers Meeting (PILOM), the Customs Heads of Administration Regional Meeting (CHARM), and the South Pacific Chiefs of Police Conference (SPCPC).
- ¹² 2004. *Transnational Terrorism: The threat to Australia*, a White Paper, Commonwealth of Australia, June 66. Although earlier statements from Bin Laden

had maligned Australia, this was the first express confirmation of the country's status as an Al Q'aeda "target".

¹³ Hill, R., 2003. Regional terrorism, global security and the defence of Australia, RUSI Triennial International Seminar, National Convention Centre, Canberra, 9 October.

¹⁴ Alexander Downer, speech delivered at Australian National University, 14 October 2003 cited in Kelsey, J., Big Brothers Behaving Badly—The Implications for the Pacific Islands of the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER), an interim report commissioned by the Pacific Network on Globalisation (PANG), April 2004.

¹⁵ Clause 4 reads: "The Forum noted that the most immediate risks to security in the region hinge on regional and domestic developments, including natural disasters, trans-national crime including drug trafficking, and economic, social and environmental policies".

¹⁶ Seng, T., 2003 Security Challenges in the South Pacific and Australian Pre-emption Policy, Institute of Defence & Strategic Studies, Singapore, June

¹⁷ Wainwright, E., 2003. Our Failed Neighbour—Australia and the future of the Solomon Islands, The Australian Strategic Policy Institute, October. [online] <<http://www.aspi.org.au/pdf/solomons.pdf>>.

¹⁸ Speech at the launch of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute Report "Our Failed Neighbour— Australia and the future of the Solomon Islands", 10 June 2003. [online] <http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/2003/030610_solomonislands.html>.

¹⁹ *Ibid*

²⁰ Advance, Australia Fair, *op. cit.* fn 10.

²¹ *Op. cit.* fn 18. Mr Downer stated: "such an approach [multilateral intervention] is feasible now in a way that it would not have been at the time of the upheavals in 2000. At that time, the country was on the verge of civil war, with the support of large segments of the population. The legitimacy of the government was questionable. Our involvement would have meant imposing an external solution by force. Truce negotiations were only just beginning and these had to be given time to work.": *ibid*.

²² Wainwright, E., 2003. Responding to state failure—The case of Australia and Solomon Islands, *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 57, November.

²³ Dobell, G., *op. cit.* fn 4.

²⁴ Seng, T., *op. cit.* fn 16.

²⁵ Many commentators have also claimed that Australia's policy changes are a function of its supportive relationship with the United States. See, for example, McGhie, G., 2004. Australia, New Zealand and the Neighbourhood, *The Australian Financial Review*. [online] <http://www.transtasman.co.nz/free_content/articles2004/anz_neighbrhd.html>; "Canberra's cloning of the Bush preemptive

strike doctrine represents a 'hard' response to the post 9/11 world. Australia feels more strategically threatened than New Zealand while attachment to the hyperpower seems to provide Canberra with a psychological, intellectual/ideological, economic and technological/defence foundation for the more assertive policy."

²⁶ Federal Agent Michael Jarrat, Coordinator (Operations), Australian Federal Police, address delivered to 22nd Australian CSCAP meeting, Australian National University, Canberra, 9 February 2005 (author's own notes).

²⁷ Counter-terrorism and Australian Aid, Commonwealth of Australia, 2004. [online] <<http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/counterterrorism.pdf>>

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Australian Federal Police website. [online] <<http://www.afp.gov.au/afp/page/media/2004/1506suva.htm>>.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Most emphatically exemplified by the termination of the Fiji TCU's 'Operation Outrigger' which uncovered a clandestine methamphetamine laboratory holding sufficient precursor material to produce F\$1 billion of methamphetamine and capable of continuing to produce a further F\$500,000,000 worth per month (author's own notes as former prosecution counsel in the case).

³³ Transnational Terrorism: The threat to Australia, *op. cit.* fn 12.

³⁴ This is frequently criticised as 'boomerang aid' by dint of the fact that it is Australian personnel who ultimately receive the salaries and emoluments commensurate with these 'key' positions.

³⁵ This is pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation in the Management of Asylum Seekers and Related Issues, signed on 25 February 2004: "Republic of Nauru Country Brief - October 2004", Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. [online] <http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/nauru/nauru_brief.html#aust_relations>.

³⁶ Radio New Zealand, Pacific News, 5 April 2005.

³⁷ Security Challenges in the South Pacific and Australian Pre-emption Policy, *op. cit.* fn 16.

³⁸ Our Failed Neighbour—Australia and the future of the Solomon Islands, *op. cit.* fn 17. Some observers perceive similar observations by the Australian Government as "rhetoric designed to appeal to Australia's fellow members of the 'coalition of the willing' (the US and Britain) and Howard's domestic constituency": Dinnan, S., quoted in Australia's New Taste for Intervention, BBC News Online, July 2003. [online] <<http://www.bbcnews.co.uk>>.

³⁹ In the same vein, on 27 August 2003 the SBS TV current affairs programme *Dateline*, citing "a highly-placed source", reported that the decision to dispatch troops may have been prompted by concern that Indonesia was on the verge

of doing the same: "New evidence points to Australia's predatory motives in the Solomons", The World Socialist Website. [online] <<http://www.wsws.org>>.

⁴⁰ The Judgment of the Solomons, The Economist, 24 July 2003. To similar effect, New Zealand's Foreign Minister openly voiced concerns at a potential for a "vacuum of authority" which might "encourage transnational crime, including the smuggling of weapons and people": BBC News Online, *op. cit.* fn 38.

⁴¹ Transnational Terrorism: The threat to Australia, *op. cit.* fn 33, 85.

⁴² These comments were dismissed by the opposition at the time as mere "hairy-chestedness": The Economist, *op. cit.* fn 10.

⁴³ BBC News Online, *op. cit.* fn 38.

⁴⁴ In the past 30 years the region has received almost US\$50 billion (\$85 billion) in aid from France, Australia, the US, Japan, New Zealand the European Union. No other region in the world in recent years has received as much in relation to their populations. On average, the Pacific received US\$220 (\$377) a head between 1995 and 1999, 10 times the per capita figure for sub-Saharan Africa: Playing Big Brother in the Pacific, New Zealand Herald, 21 June 2003.

⁴⁵ Australian aid to the South Pacific has grown in the last five years from \$429 million to \$526 million between 2002 and 2003: Wainwright, E., *op. cit.* fn 17.

⁴⁶ BBC News Online, *op. cit.* fn 38.

⁴⁷ Big Brother? The Economist, 25 September 2003. Similarly, the exhortations of Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara in 2001 that Forum leaders ensure they are "fully in control of their destiny" because "too often aid comes with strings attached" were dismissed by New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark as "unfortunate": Television New Zealand, *OneNews*, 17 August 2001 (cited in Kelsey, J., *op. cit.* fn 14).

⁴⁸ Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2003. [online] <<http://www.transparency.org>>.

⁴⁹ In September, Australian Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, opined that PNG was "very lucky" to have this money and described Australia's conditions as part of "heightened Australian engagement in Papua New Guinea": The Economist, *op. cit.* fn 42.

⁵⁰ The report was not the first to allege a "failed policy" of mere aid provision. In July 2003 a high profile report issued by the conservative think tank The Centre for Independent Studies noted that "since 1970 the Pacific has received US\$50 billion—A\$100 billion (in 1998 dollars)—in aid. Australia has been the largest donor. But because aid flows are not earned income, they create economic 'rents' that distort economies. Aid flows are fungible. They can be spent on projects and programmes of the recipient's choosing - on consumption rather than investment. Because they bias an economy against the private sector, they undercut employment and growth and lead to corruption... Australian aid funds must be removed from Pacific island budgets where they encourage waste and corruption. Aid should only be spent on mutually agreed development projects

and programmes designed and monitored by teams nominated by the sovereign recipients and donors. Funds should only be disbursed on the evidence of met targets and audited expenditures. Without such changes, Australian aid will continue to damage the Pacific": Hughes, H., 2003. *Aid has failed the Pacific*, Centre for Independent Studies, Sydney, July.

⁵¹ *Ibid*

⁵² Speech delivered at Australian National University, 14 October 2003 (cited in Kelsey, J., *op. cit.* fn 14).

⁵³ Kelsey, J., *op. cit.* fn 13.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* Quite apart from issues of tied aid and intervention, Australia's and New Zealand's criticisms of post-coup Fiji and of corruption scandals in Vanuatu and PNG, together with their shared support for the pro-democracy movement in Tonga, were seen as unwelcome interference from former colonial powers.

⁵⁵ Address at the Australian Defence Studies Centre (cited in Dickens, D., "Images of New Zealand and Australia", Institute for Strategic Studies (Wellington, 2000)).

⁵⁶ The incident has received wide media attention. See for example ABC Television, *News*, 1 April 2005.

⁵⁷ The Eminent Persons' Group Review of the Pacific Islands Forum, April 2004, p16, forumsec.org.fj, accessed June 2004.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p23.

⁵⁹ This appellation is attributed to former Cook Islands Prime Minister, Dr Terepai Maoate—see Seng, T., *op. cit.* fn 16.

⁶⁰ Seng, T., *op. cit.* fn 16.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* Other commentators have made similar comments: "The parallels between the Forum and the ASEAN Regional Forum are striking. Both institutions were accused of failure to act in similar circumstances (East Timor for the ARF and, as mentioned, Fiji and the Solomon Islands for the Forum). Both institutions are constrained by a lack of consensus among members and yet are singled out for blame." Dickens, D., *op cit* fn 55.

⁶² Kelsey, J., *op. cit.* fn 14.

⁶³ The Unpacific Pacific, *The Economist*, 21 August 2003.

⁶⁴ "There is particular anger that Australian Prime Minister Howard gatecrashed a caucus of Small Island States at the Forum Leaders meeting at which the election was held": Kelsey, J. *op. cit.* fn 13.

⁶⁵ The Eminent Persons' Group Review of the Pacific Islands Forum, *op. cit.* fn 56, p12.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p28.

⁶⁷ Tarte, S., 2003. New Secretary General for Pacific Islands Forum, *Pacific News Bulletin* 1.

⁶⁸ Kelsey, J., *op. cit.* fn 14.

⁶⁹ The Australian, 25 August 2003 (cited in Kelsey, J., *op. cit.* fn 14)

⁷⁰ The Economist, *op. cit.* fn 10

⁷¹ 2004. Police Join the Front Line: Building Australia's International Policing Capability, Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) Strategic Insight No. 1/2004, January.

⁷² Wainwright, E., *op. cit.* fn 22.

⁷³ Field, M., 2003. Australia Leads Charge in Operation Helpum Fren: Is it massive overkill or recolonisation?, Pacific Magazine, September.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*

⁷⁵ *Ibid*

⁷⁶ It should also be noted that the Biketawa declaration sanctions intervention even where no request has been made: intervention is contemplated "in time of crisis or in response to members' request for assistance" (emphasis added).

⁷⁷ Dr Dinnan questioned the "current thinking of rebuilding the old institutions" so as to impose government "from the top down" noting that the complete "re-negotiation" of State intervention in the rural communities of Bougainville was a positive example of an alternative "radical solution" focusing on reconstruction "from the bottom up": Presentation to the 2004 FRSC inter-sessionary panel on "Challenges to Governance in the Pacific", Nadi, Fiji, 17 June 2004 (author's own notes).

⁷⁸ Seng, T., *op. cit.* fn 16.

⁷⁹ McGhie, G., *op. cit.* fn 25.

⁸⁰ O'Connell, M., 2003. Review Essay: Re-Leashing the Dogs of War: International Law and the Use of Force' 97 *The American Journal of International Law* 446, April. For his troubles, Mr Howard was heavily criticised by ASEAN members and received no support from members of the European Union.

⁸¹ Seng, T., *op. cit.* fn 16.

⁸¹ Howard, J., 2005. The Lowy Lecture on Australia in the World, lecture delivered at the Lowy Institute, Canberra, 31 March.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Shed sovereignty to make Pacific work, New Zealand Herald, 23 March. 2005.