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Reframing regional security in the post–Cold War era

Alongside the attempt over the past three decades to create a regional economic order based on neoliberal principles, there has been an equally significant attempt to reframe the regional security order. As with the reframing of economic development, Canberra and Wellington have been the chief promoters of this post–Cold War framing of regional security. The new security framing has involved a reconceptualisation of the regional security ‘problem’ and a rethinking of regional approaches to its solution.

This rethinking has gone through several phases, responding to global and regional developments, as well as to domestic politics in Canberra. Spurred initially in the early 1990s by global developments in transnational crime, then from 2000 by political crises in some Pacific island states, and then from 2001 by the global war on terror, Australia and New Zealand proposed ever-deepening levels of regional integration to activate regional intervention both preemptively and at times of crisis. They promoted, and gained agreement to, an increasingly institutionalised regional security regime in an attempt to build a regional *cordon sanitaire* against unwelcome transnational influences while building regional mechanisms for intervention in political crises within states. Ultimately, this new security framing was represented in a new regional institutional network coordinated under the Forum Regional Security Committee (FRSC) and in new regional norms agreed to by PIF leaders in a series of regional declarations, agreements and codes of conduct.

This new security framing was also expressed in new regional policies of military and police intervention and in the harmonisation of national laws around regional standards. It culminated in the negotiation of the Biketawa Plus regional security agreement in 2018 and the uneasy contest between two very different security paradigms: Canberra and Wellington's attempt to reestablish the regional strategic denial doctrine of the Cold War era, but this time aimed at China; and the Pacific island country leaders' attempt to promote a human security paradigm with climate change as the priority concern.

Laying the foundations: Honiara to Aitutaki

During the Cold War, Australian and New Zealand policymakers were concerned with countering a perceived Soviet threat and promoting regional strategic denial through the SPF. With the end of the perceived Soviet threat, Canberra began to define regional security in 'small "s" security' terms, with a focus on transnational crime as the principal threat. As put by Douglas Ranmuthugala, a senior intelligence analyst with the Australian Federal Police:

One reason for this may be that the vast machinery poised to counter threats to security in the conventional sense now found that it was running out of targets. Highly trained and resourced agencies had to face either dramatic cuts or reorient themselves to face newly discovered threats. And suddenly, law enforcement found that it was no longer the Cinderella in the security field, and that it was being wooed by powerful agencies.¹

This change of 'paradigm', as Ranmuthugala described it, reflected a change in global security thinking following the end of the Cold War. The rich Western countries were indicating their commitment to cracking down on countries that were encouraging the activities of criminal gangs in drug running, money laundering and human trafficking. This was seen, for example, in the recommendations of the Group of Seven (G-7) Financial Action Task Force and new global agreements such as the 1988 UN Convention against Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.²

1 Douglas Ranmuthugala, 'Security in the South Pacific: The Law Enforcement Dimension', *Revue Juridique Polynésienne*, 1, 2001, p. 172.

2 *United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances*, Vienna, 20 December 1988.

The change of paradigm was also spurred by perceptions of increased transnational crime within the Pacific region. Karl Claxton notes that the Regional Law Enforcement Needs Assessment

assesses the island states as being attractive as supply routes for drug traffickers dealing in both hard and soft illicit drugs within the Southeast Asia, Australasian, North and Central American regions.

And that:

Underworld infiltration into island economies as a result of the drug trafficking activities of Australian Mafia, American cartels, Hong Kong triads and Japanese crime gangs is not yet thought to be widespread, although early indications of limited involvement by all those groups has been detected.³

If the security threat was now to be seen as transnational crime, the new solution was the creation of a regional *cordon sanitaire* through intelligence sharing, regional harmonisation of laws and practices on law enforcement and institutionalising cooperation through an enhanced FRSC, which would bring existing regional agencies under the PIF's umbrella. It would include appropriate training and capacity-building in law enforcement, customs and intelligence sharing. The new paradigm entered the regional space in 1991 as a review report for the SPF Secretariat undertaken by an Australian consultant.⁴ The findings of the Regional Law Enforcement Needs Assessment concluded that

a broad definition of both 'law enforcement cooperation' and 'security' is necessary; that national resource constraints facing law enforcement agencies mean that regional activities offer tangible benefits; and that in areas where several regional and international initiatives or organisations deal with common issues the Secretariat should seek to provide a coordinating and information analysing facility rather than duplicating the work of existing bodies.⁵

3 As reported in Karl Claxton, 'The Nature and Extent of Crime in the South Pacific and the Region's Attempts to Respond to this Challenge', MA (Strategic Studies) Research Essay, The Australian National University, Canberra, 25 February 1994, p. 16.

4 Perry Head, *Regional Law Enforcement Needs Assessment: Prospects for Enhancing Regional Cooperation*, Discussion Paper prepared for the Forum Secretariat, Suva: SPF Secretariat, June 1991.

5 As reported in Claxton, 'The Nature and Extent of Crime', p. 29.

The Forum Island Countries (FICs) indicated their acceptance of these recommendations in signing on to the Honiara Declaration on Law Enforcement Cooperation at the SPF meeting in Honiara in 1992.⁶ In the Honiara Declaration, the Pacific leaders recognised that ‘the potential impact of transnational crime was a matter for increasing concern to regional states and enforcement agencies’ and that ‘there was a need for a more comprehensive, integrated and collaborative approach to counter these threats’.⁷ They tasked the FRSC with coordinating the work of the specialised regional law enforcement agencies such as the Pacific Islands Law Officers Meeting, the Customs Heads of Administration Regional Meeting and the South Pacific Chiefs of Police Conference.

This Australian project to create a regional transnational security network was joined by another, related, Australian regional security project from 1992. Australia began to promote a broader concept of regional security with greater emphasis on internal political and security crises as the security problem, and preventive diplomacy and other forms of regional intervention as the necessary policy responses. This did not displace the transnational crime agenda; it was seen as complementary. It was another layer in the new regional security thinking in Canberra emphasising internal political stability of the island states as the core concern.

Like the transnational crime agenda, this new agenda was partly inspired by the new global trends in security thinking at the end of the Cold War. In this case, the new global thinking was the discourse on preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peacemaking as expressed in the UN Secretary-General’s *Agenda for Peace* and its underlying premise ‘that the time of absolute and exclusive sovereignty ... has passed’.⁸ This policy framing was also inspired by developments within the region. Australian policymakers were mindful of the poor governance in some Pacific island states and the breakdown of constitutional government, which occurred with the coup in Fiji in 1987, the ‘President’s coup’ in Vanuatu in 1988 and the Bougainville rebellion in Papua New Guinea, which began in 1989.⁹

6 SPF Secretariat, *Declaration by the South Pacific Forum on Law Enforcement Cooperation [Honiara Declaration]*, Suva: SPF Secretariat, 1992.

7 *ibid.*, para. 1.

8 United Nations Secretary-General, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-Keeping*, Report of the United Nations Secretary-General, A47/277, New York: United Nations, 17 June 1992.

9 Ken Ross, *Prospects for Crisis Prediction: A South Pacific Case Study*, Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, The Australian National University, 1990, pp. 91–2.

The translation of this Australian agenda into a regional one, accepted by the Pacific island states, was achieved at the 1997 SPF meeting, where, in the Aitutaki Declaration on Regional Security Cooperation, the SPF leaders ‘accepted the need for the region to take on a more comprehensive approach to regional security consistent with the relevant principles of the United Nation’s [sic] Agenda for Peace’.¹⁰ As well as placing greater emphasis on internal political crisis as the potential security problem, its principal new commitment was to strengthen regional mechanisms for preventive diplomacy, including the use of the ‘good offices of the Forum Secretary-General, eminent persons, fact finding missions and third party mediation’. In another important departure, the SPF leaders also agreed ‘that procedures should be developed and put in place which would better facilitate responses by the region’s disciplined forces’.¹¹

The ‘arc of crisis’ and the Biketawa Declaration

From 2000, it seemed—at least for Canberra and Wellington—that the concerns of the Aitutaki Declaration with identifying potential internal crises as the key security threat, and with developing regional mechanisms to respond, were not misplaced. The overthrow of democratic and constitutional governments in Fiji and Solomon Islands in 2000 led some commentators to describe the South Pacific island region as an eastern extension of the ‘arc of crisis’—identified from the late 1990s as stretching from Aceh, through Timor, Ambon and Irian Jaya (and, in some versions, Papua New Guinea). Other observers found their analogy not in island South-East Asia, but in the Balkans or Africa.¹² Whatever the political analogy, the general message was the same: the South Pacific was now to be seen in Kaplanesque terms—‘island states at various points on a path to the ‘coming anarchy’¹³ of ethnic conflict, state breakdown, gun culture, violence, fragmentation and economic collapse. Solomon Islands and Fiji

10 SPF Secretariat, *Aitutaki Declaration on Regional Security Cooperation*, Suva: SPF Secretariat, 18 September 1997, available from: www.forumsec.org/aitutaki-declaration-on-regional-security-cooperation/, Clause (3).

11 *ibid.*

12 Greg Sheridan, ‘Breaking Up Brings No Benefit: We Are Witnessing the Balkanisation of the Region’, *The Australian*, 9 June 2000, p. 13; and Ben Reilly, ‘The Africanisation of the South Pacific’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 54(3), 2000: 261–8.

13 Robert Kaplan, ‘The Coming Anarchy’, *The Atlantic*, February 1994, available from: www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1994/02/the-coming-anarchy/304670/.

were seen as having already arrived at this state, Papua New Guinea as teetering on the edge and the other 11 Pacific island states as developing the symptoms of instability.

The events in Suva in May 2000 were what first prompted commentators to refer to the Pacific as a whole as an extension of the ‘arc of crisis’ or as a ‘region of instability’.¹⁴ The hostage crisis quickly turned into a much deeper political crisis about the future governance of the country. There was a breakdown of shared understandings about the legitimacy of the elected government, of the 1997 constitution, of democratic principles, of Fijian traditional leadership and even of the idea of Fiji as an ongoing unified entity. The rule of law was undermined and the economy seriously affected. The gravity of the situation was accentuated by the fact that this was the second major breakdown in Fijian governance and that there had been enormous effort by all communities to come back from the divisive, unjust and ineffective governance arrangements of 1987–97.

The so-called copycat coup in Honiara two weeks after the hostage-taking in Suva perhaps understandably caused editorialists, commentators and political cartoonists to portray the Pacific as a series of vulnerable island societies ready to follow suit. As in Suva, the hostage crisis in Honiara quickly revealed a wider ethnonationalist claim, this time on behalf of Malaitans. A new government was subsequently formed in dubious circumstances and was seen as backing the militant group behind the hostage-taking, the Malaitan Eagle Force. The conflict between Guadalcanal militants—the Isatabu Freedom Movement—and the Malaita Eagle Force escalated until peacemaking efforts produced a peace agreement in October 2000.¹⁵ As in Fiji, in Solomon Islands, the government of the day was removed, democratic procedure ignored and the very future of a unified state was threatened. Solomon Islands also took a step closer to all-out civil war—a possibility not ruled out in Fiji but fortunately contained.¹⁶

14 Sheridan, ‘Breaking Up Brings No Benefit’; and Reilly, ‘The Africanisation of the South Pacific’.

15 DFAT, ‘Agreement between Solomon Islands, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Tonga Concerning the Operations and Status of the Police and Armed Forces and Other Personnel Deployed to Solomon Islands to Assist in the Restoration of Law and Order and Security (Townsville, 24 July 2003)’, [Townsville Peace Agreement], *Australian Treaty Series*, 17, Canberra: AGPS, 2003.

16 For a more detailed development of this argument, see Greg Fry, ‘Political Legitimacy and the Post-colonial State in the Pacific: Reflections on Some Common Threads in the Fiji and Solomon Islands Coups’, *Pacifica Review*, 12(3), 2000: 295–304.

Although the concern with how states were governed was part of the neoliberal framing of the Pacific in the 1990s, it was focused not on issues of state failure and defending the constitutional state, but rather on the capacity and efficiency of the state to deliver sound economic management. The concerns were those of the World Bank with efficient and accountable government for neoliberal development rather than that of *democratic* government. The coups in Fiji and Solomon Islands shifted this concern with bolstering a regional norm of good governance to a different level of significance. The focus was now on supporting state stability and the preservation of democracy. As a direct outcome of these crises, and in the spirit of the Aitutaki Declaration, the Forum Foreign Ministers Meeting (FFMM) was held for the first time, in Apia in August 2000, to discuss what role the PIF might take in relation to assisting with a resolution of these crises. Nicola Baker contends that it was the New Zealand Government that dominated the discussions leading to a proposal to develop more effective regional mechanisms for dealing with crises:

New Zealand's Foreign Minister, Phil Goff, had put forward a proposal that the Forum build on its previous declarations on regional security and develop procedures and processes for dealing with similar situations. The Australian foreign minister did not contribute at all to the ensuing discussion.¹⁷

At the PIF meeting in October 2000, New Zealand prime minister Clark and Australian prime minister Howard fought hard to gain support from Pacific island leaders for a strongly worded declaration that would capture the recommendations of the Apia meeting. They wanted a declaration that would give the PIF states the facility to impose sanctions, including suspension from the PIF, as a last resort in dealing with a member state which had violated the norms of good governance and democracy. The result was the Biketawa Declaration, which sets out shared regional norms concerning good governance and individual liberty, democracy and the rule of law, and a set of regional mechanisms, which may be activated if these norms are violated.¹⁸ These include a specially convened FFMM to consider possible regional actions, the creation of a ministerial action group, third-party mediation, a fact-finding mission and the convening of a special high-level meeting of the Forum Security Committee.

17 Baker, 'New Zealand and Australia in Pacific Regionalism', pp. 142–3.

18 PIFS, '*Biketawa*' Declaration, Suva: PIFS, 28 October 2000, available from: www.forumsec.org/biketawa-declaration/.

The declaration's most potent and controversial clause states that, if, after such actions are taken, the crisis persists: 'convene a special meeting of Forum leaders to consider other options including if necessary targeted measures'.¹⁹ Subsequent interpretations of 'targeted measures' have included intervention by disciplined forces, at the invitation of the member state, in the case of Solomon Islands in 2003, and suspension of a PIF member, in the case of Fiji in 2009.

To gain the agreement of the Pacific island leaders to the proposed declaration, Clark had proposed the substitution of 'targeted measures' for 'sanctions' (in view of Fiji's objection to 'sanctions').²⁰ She also reluctantly conceded that the Biketawa Declaration would not apply retrospectively to the Fiji and Solomon Islands crises. Australia and New Zealand nevertheless saw this as a great achievement. They saw the declaration as providing, for the first time, a clear set of prescribed measures in the case of a political crisis in a member country. As reported by Stewart Firth:

[T]he Biketawa Declaration was acclaimed as a breakthrough ...

John Howard thought the Forum had taken 'a quantum leap forward in relevance' and Helen Clark, while disappointed that the Forum took no immediate action against Fiji, claimed the declaration enabled the Forum to become 'a significant regional organisation ... taking a step beyond talk, talk, talk'.²¹

President Tito of Kiribati, PIF chairman and a supporter of the push by New Zealand and Australia for the Biketawa Declaration, made the following assessment of its significance:

This is the framework to hold our region together. It's like a village where we now agree for the first time in the history of the Pacific that we have some common rules about our village. And these are the rules now; they may not be perfect. We have also agreed on how we should deal with a member of the village who's not complying with the rules of the village. That is the way I see it now.²²

19 *ibid.*

20 David Lewis, 'Helen Clark's OE', *Pundit*, 13 February 2009, available from: www.pundit.co.nz/content/helen-clarks-oe.

21 Stewart Firth, 'A Reflection on South Pacific Regional Security, Mid-2000 to Mid-2001', *Journal of Pacific History*, 36(3), 2001: 277–83, at p. 279.

22 'Pacific Islands Forum Takes No Action against Fiji, Sets up Future Crisis', *PINA News*, [Tarawa], 29 October 2000 (as reported in *Pacific Islands Report*, East–West Center, 30 October 2000).

Niue's Premier, Sani Lakatani, was reported to have had a different reaction to the 'consensus' decision, seeing it instead as a decision imposed by Australia and New Zealand. At the leaders' dinner, he reportedly made 'an unprompted, emotional speech about the treatment of small countries by big ones'.²³

Despite this perceived dominance by the larger metropolitan neighbours in getting their way with the Biketawa Declaration, the new commitments in the declaration made no difference to the way the PIF dealt with the Fiji crisis. As in the case of Fiji's 1987 coup, the Pacific island leaders 'ruled out any action': 'Pacific island members apparently felt Fiji is on the path back to democracy and should be allowed to continue this without outside interference.'²⁴ The PIF communiqué stated:

Leaders also welcomed the effort and commitment to date by the Fiji Interim Government to return the country to constitutional democracy and looked forward to further progress in these efforts.²⁵

The 'war on terror' and regional intervention²⁶

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, and the launching of the global 'war on terror', gave heightened significance to the 'arc of instability' image of the Pacific island region. As seen from Canberra, the potential threats from transnational crime, particularly in relation to money laundering, now took on more urgency. The failure of a number of island governments to act on the commitments entered into under the Honiara Declaration a decade earlier prompted the Australian Government to promote a new regional security declaration focused on the new security environment and calling for action on the Honiara Declaration. In the Nasonini Declaration on Regional Security, signed at the Suva PIF meeting in August 2002, the 'leaders recalled their commitment to good governance practices' and 'their concern about the recent heightened threat to global

23 Audrey Young, 'Clark Leads at Pacific Islands Forum', *New Zealand Herald*, 26 October 2000.

24 'Pacific Islands Forum Takes No Action against Fiji'.

25 PIFS, *Leaders' Communiqué: Thirty-First Pacific Islands Forum, Tarawa, Republic of Kiribati, 27–30 October 2000*, Suva: PIFS, 2000.

26 This section was first published in "'Our Patch": The War on Terror and the New Interventionism', in Greg Fry and Tarcisius Kabutaulaka (eds), *Intervention and State-Building in the Pacific: The Legitimacy of 'Co-operative Intervention'* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008, pp. 72–86).

and regional security following the events of September 11th, 2001, in particular those posed by international terrorism and transnational crime'. They reaffirmed the importance of the Honiara Declaration 'to address these new and heightened threats to security in the region' and

underlined their commitment to the importance of global efforts to combat terrorism and to implement internationally agreed anti-terrorism measures, such as the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 and the Financial Action Task Force Special Recommendations, including associated reporting requirements.

They also noted that,

while some progress has been made in the implementation of the Honiara Declaration, further urgent action was required of some member states and recommitted to full implementation of relevant legislation under the Honiara Declaration by the end of 2003.²⁷

More significantly, the war on terror moved regional intervention from a declaratory possibility under the Biketawa Declaration to an actuality. This was a direct outcome of the impact of the war on terror and related alliance politics on Australia's regional security policy. While the Australian Government did not necessarily fully endorse the more alarmist conclusions of some think tanks about the potential 'terrorist havens' in the 'failed states' of the Pacific, the war on terror undoubtedly led to a dramatic reassessment of Canberra's thinking about the need for more robust intervention in the Pacific island states as part of its regional security approach.²⁸ In mid 2003, it developed a new doctrine of 'cooperative intervention' and began to plan police-led intervention in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands.²⁹ In sentiments reminiscent of Australian Pacific policy of the 1940s and the 1970s—examined in earlier chapters—prime minister Howard commented:

27 PIFS, *Nasonini Declaration on Regional Security*, Suva: PIFS, 2002, available from: www.forumsec.org/nasonini-declaration-on-regional-security/, Clauses 5 and 7.

28 Elsa Wainwright, *Our Failing Neighbour: Australia and the Future of Solomon Islands*, Canberra: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 10 June 2003.

29 See Greg Fry and Tarcisius Kabutaulaka, 'Political Legitimacy and State-Building Intervention in the Pacific', in Greg Fry and Tarcisius Kabutaulaka, eds, *Intervention and State-Building in the Pacific: The Legitimacy of 'Co-operative Intervention'*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008.

The rest of the world sees Australia as having a special role in this area and I believe that the Australian Government and the Australian people should assume it ... But this is our patch. We have a special responsibility in this part of the world. I believe that very strongly.³⁰

However, as Nicola Baker persuasively argues, the Solomon Islands intervention would have remained a unilateral initiative if it were not for Helen Clark's role in persuading Howard to make it a regional intervention under the auspices of the PIF and its Biketawa Declaration.³¹ The Howard Government accepted this advice and asked for a regional Forum Foreign Ministers Meeting in Sydney in July 2003 to discuss the Solomon Islands prime minister's request for assistance in the crisis impacting his country. Following the signing of the subsequent Townsville Peace Agreement governing the intervention, the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) was established as a regional initiative under the legal jurisdiction of the PIF.³²

This was a major intervention, which lasted 14 years. It began as a police-led intervention with the support of some Australian and New Zealand military personnel. The police contingent was drawn from all PIF countries. Australia led the mission and Australian personnel dominated the civilian contingent involved in advising the law and order, governance and financial pillars of the intervention, which were aimed at remaking the state. The initial task of reestablishing law and order was very successful, and the mission then settled down to the long haul of rebuilding the state. Given the Australian dominance in materiel, finance and personnel as well as in leadership positions, pressure began to build to review the governance of the mission.³³ A two-person mission recommended a reassertion of PIF jurisdiction.³⁴ This was done through regular reporting to the FRSC and some readjustments of the nature of the mission to ensure more regional representation at higher levels.

30 'Pacific Leaders Back Australian Role', *The Age*, [Melbourne], 9 August 2004.

31 Baker, 'New Zealand and Australia in Pacific Regionalism'.

32 Townsville Peace Agreement.

33 PIFS, *Leaders' Communiqué: Thirty-Seventh Pacific Islands Forum, Nadi, Fiji, 24–25 October 2006*, Suva: PIFS, 2006, available from: www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2006-Forum-Communiqué%CC%81_-Denarau_-Nadi_-Fiji_-24-25-Oct.pdf, paras 1 and 2.

34 PIFS, *A Review of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands: Report of the Pacific Islands Forum Eminent Persons Group*, Suva: PIFS, May 2005.

The RAMSI experience ultimately enhanced the reputation of the Biketawa Declaration. When the Solomon Islands mission ended in 2016, the reviews were generally positive.³⁵ Even Solomon Islands prime minister Sogavare, who had earlier been very critical of RAMSI, was a strong supporter at the time of RAMSI's departure.³⁶ He became a champion of the Biketawa Declaration to the point where, in 2017, he called for 'Biketawa-plus'—an enhanced Biketawa—to take account of the new regional security environment.³⁷ The PIF review, however, raised some issues about the intervention as a regional venture:

The Office of the Special Coordinator liaised with the Forum and the SIG [Solomon Islands Government], but operations were primarily overseen from Canberra as were controls over key appointments ... Though RAMSI is often seen as a stellar example of regional cooperation, the mission might have been better served by drawing more constructively on that regional element, not simply in terms of personnel, but also as regards command structure.³⁸

Australia's new interventionism in the Pacific prompted by the war on terror also had an impact on its commitment to reform Pacific regionalism as practised through the PIF. Apart from supporting an enhanced pooling of regional governance and a further compromise on national sovereignty, Australia was concerned to establish security as one of the pillars of the Pacific Plan, and for the plan to revisit the various regional security objectives it had failed to achieve in the 1990s despite declaratory agreement by Pacific island leaders. This, then, was an effort to give the security agenda new focus and force with new powers for the PIFS. New Zealand shared the commitment to regional reform and a more interventionist regionalism, but from different motives. It is notable that Clark was not embracing Canberra's war on terror motivation, but rather was concerned about internal crises and their impact on poverty.³⁹

35 Jon Fraenkel, Joni Madraiwiwi, and Henry Okole, *The RAMSI Decade: A Review of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, 2003–2013*, Honiara: Solomon Islands Government, 14 July 2014.

36 Manasseh Sogavare, 'Message of Appreciation by Prime Minister Hon. Manasseh Sogavare to RAMSI, RAMSI Participating Countries', Prime Minister's Press Secretariat, Honiara, 25 June 2017.

37 Manasseh Damukana Sogavare, 'Solomon Islands Statement by Hon. Manasseh Damukana Sogavare, MP Prime Minister, 72nd Session United Nations General Assembly, General Debate', United Nations, New York, 2017, available from: gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/72/sb_en.pdf; PIFS, *Leaders' Communiqué: Forty-Eighth Pacific Islands Forum*, paras 31–4.

38 Fraenkel et al., *The RAMSI Decade*, p. 79, para. 15.6.

39 'The United States of the Pacific', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 March 2004, p. 12.

The war on terror framing of Australia's regional security policy was also expressed in an effort to ramp up regional action on transnational crime. The Australian Federal Police set up a regional network of transnational crime units in Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Tonga and Samoa and, in June 2004, established the Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre (PTCCC) in Suva, which was moved to Apia after the 2006 coup in Fiji. Although the PTCCC was not set up by the PIF leaders or under the auspices of the PIF, Pacific leaders welcomed its establishment at the 2004 PIF meeting.⁴⁰

The suspension of Fiji and the non-intervention principle

In the case of Solomon Islands, the Biketawa Declaration was invoked in a context in which the government had requested regional assistance with a domestic crisis. In 2009, Biketawa was invoked for the first time in applying 'targeted measures' on a member state without the agreement of the affected country. This therefore represented a major departure from the non-intervention principle that had underpinned Pacific regionalism since 1971. The occasion was the decision of the Pacific leaders at a special leaders' retreat in Port Moresby on 27 January 2009.⁴¹ The PIF chair, Toke Talagi, Premier of Niue, announced the decision in a press statement on 2 May 2009. The decision to 'suspend' Fiji 'from full participation in the Pacific Islands Forum' took immediate effect. Premier Talagi added that the 'unanimous' decision of all PIF leaders

[r]esponds to Commodore Bainimarama's failure to address constructively by 1 May 2009 the expectations of Forum leaders to return Fiji to democratic governance in an acceptable time-frame ...

Respond directly to the confirmation by the military regime in Fiji ... that it rejects fundamental Forum obligations and core principles, as outlined in the Biketawa Declaration and other key guiding documents of the Forum. Reflecting on the Leaders Vision Statement of 2004, this involves cooperation through the

40 PIFS, *Leaders' Communiqué: Thirty-Fifth Pacific Islands Forum, Apia, Samoa, 5–7 August 2004*, Suva: PIFS, 2004.

41 PIFS, *Leaders' Decisions: Pacific Islands Forum Special Leaders' Retreat, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, 27 January 2009*, Suva: PIFS, 2009.

Forum to create a Pacific region 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.⁴²

Over the previous two years, since the Fiji coup in December 2006, the PIF leaders had been working their way through less intrusive measures under the Biketawa Declaration. They had begun with the establishment of the EPG, which visited Fiji in January 2007. At the October 2007 PIF meeting, Prime Minister of Fiji, Frank Bainimarama, gave an undertaking that an election would be held in the first quarter of 2009. The PIF leaders also called on Fiji to work with the PIF–Fiji Joint Working Group (of officials) to produce a credible roadmap. To this point, the Biketawa measures seemed to be effective. But in June 2008, Commodore Bainimarama announced that he had decided ‘that Fiji will no longer participate in the Forum Working Group meetings until such time [as] the positions of Australia and New Zealand are genuine’.⁴³ Fiji also failed to attend the August 2008 PIF meeting. The communiqué criticised this absence and condemned recent statements from Fiji suggesting that the commitment to hold an election in 2009 would be broken. The PIF also decided to hold a special meeting of leaders to consider special ‘targeted measures’, including suspension.⁴⁴

It was at this point that the leaders crossed into new territory, in terms of past regional practice and in terms of the non-intervention principle, in particular. When democracy was overthrown in Fiji in 1987, and again in 2000, the Pacific island leaders would not support Australian and New Zealand efforts to have the PIF intervene, not even to discuss diplomatic measures short of intervention. Just as importantly, the Bougainville war raged within a member state for a decade from 1989 to 1999 without being raised at the PIF as a regional security issue with which it should become involved. In this case, Australia and New Zealand joined the island states in their reluctance to discuss this conflict within Papua New Guinea, despite more than 10,000 deaths.

42 PIFS, ‘Statement by Forum Chair on Suspension of the Fiji Military Regime from the Pacific Islands Forum’, Press Statement 21/09, Suva: PIFS, 2 May 2009.

43 ‘Fiji Drops Out of Forum Working Group’, *Fijilive*, 23 June 2008, available from: www.pireport.org/articles/2008/06/23/fiji-drops-out-forum-working-group.

44 PIFS, *Leaders’ Communiqué: Thirty-Ninth Pacific Islands Forum, Alofi, Niue, 19–20 August 2008*, Suva: PIFS, 2008.

Nor can we confidently point to the suspension of Fiji as a turning point in practice in upholding regional norms of democracy and the rule of law. First, there is the problem that, although there was apparent unanimity, it is clear that Australia and New Zealand were the main countries pushing for Fiji's suspension. The half-heartedness of the support of many of the island countries was soon revealed when they supported efforts by Fiji to open new forms of dialogue in new regional institutions, including the Engaging with the Pacific, the Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF), the reinvigorated MSG and the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) grouping at the United Nations.

Second, the failure of the suspension to move Fiji to elections on the timetable set by the PIF, combined with the unsettling impact of Fiji's determination to set up an alternative regionalism, has meant that there is now a question mark over the effectiveness of 'targeted measures' to achieve their objective.

Third, since the suspension of Fiji in 2009, there have been major departures from democracy, the constitution and the rule of law in two other member states, Papua New Guinea⁴⁵ and Nauru,⁴⁶ and yet Australia and New Zealand did not seek to bring them under the aegis of the Biketawa Declaration, largely because of Australia's interest in keeping on side with the ruling regimes given their importance in hosting Australia's offshore detention centres. Thus, the norm has not been established that antidemocratic moves on the part of PIF members generally prompts regional measures despite the significance of the PIF's intervention in Solomon Islands and Fiji.

45 'Papua New Guinea in Crisis as Two Claim to be Prime Minister', *The Guardian*, 14 December 2011; Matt Siegel, 'Papua New Guinea Braces for Unrest with Two Prime Ministers and Cabinets', *The New York Times*, 13 December 2011.

46 Tess Newton Cain, 'Deafening Silence on Rule of Law in Nauru', *The Interpreter*, Sydney: Lowy Institute for International Policy, 21 March 2014, available from: www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/deafening-silence-rule-law-nauru; Bal Kama, 'Nauru Rule of Law Case and the Implication for the Pacific', *Outrigger: Blog of the Pacific Institute*, Canberra: The Australian National University, 21 March 2014, available from: pacificinstitute.anu.edu.au/outrigger/2014/03/21/australias-blind-eye-while-rule-of-law-under-siege-in-the-pacific/.

Biketawa Plus: Human security versus strategic denial

From 2017, the Pacific island leaders indicated their interest in expanding the concept of regional security to meet new global and regional challenges. This was in the context of having just recognised the importance and success of the existing Biketawa Declaration in providing the conceptual frame and legal basis for RAMSI from 2003 to 2017. At the FFMM in Suva in August 2017, the Solomon Islands Government took the lead in suggesting consideration of a 'RAMSI Plus' to deal with a changing regional and global context. The other foreign ministers were in accord. They agreed to recommend that the leaders consider this proposal at the upcoming PIF meeting in Apia. It was particularly significant that Fiji's Minister for Defence and National Security, Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, publicly endorsed the idea, given Fiji's opposition to the use of the Biketawa Declaration in suspending Fiji from the PIF in 2009. Shortly after the FFMM, minister Kubuabola was reported as saying:

I wish to lend support to the idea of a Biketawa Plus. I believe that an expansion of the Biketawa Declaration to Biketawa Plus is an acknowledgement of the emergence of new global trends that is posing new and serious threats to peace, security and prosperity of our Pacific peoples and communities.⁴⁷

At the September 2017 PIF meeting in Apia, the leaders agreed with the FFMM's recommendation. They decided to 'build on the Biketawa Declaration and other Forum security related declarations as a foundation for strategic future regional responses'. They agreed that the proposed reframing of regional security should recognise 'the importance of an expanded concept of security inclusive of human security, humanitarian assistance, prioritising environmental security, and regional cooperation in building resilience to disasters and climate change'.⁴⁸ The leaders tasked the secretariat with consulting member states and civil society to produce a draft declaration for consideration at the September 2018 PIF meeting.

47 Arieta Vakasukawaqa, 'Ratu Inoke Proposes Biketawa Plus After Regional, Global Security Trends', *Fiji Sun Online*, 12 August 2017, available from: fijisun.com.fj/2017/08/12/ratu-inoke-proposes-biketawa-plus-after-regional-global-security-trends/.

48 PIFS, *Leaders' Communiqué: Forty-Eighth Pacific Islands Forum*, Clause 33.

As the PIFS carried out these region-wide consultations, its efforts were complicated by the sudden entry of a new security discourse aimed at taking the reframing of regional security in a very different direction. From early 2018, Canberra and Wellington began to focus on their ‘strategic anxieties’ about the changing geopolitics of the region. This mainly concerned the assumed implications of dependence on Chinese loans for Pacific state sovereignty. The ultimate concern was that indebtedness to China could lead to a Chinese military base in the region. In the case of Australia, in particular, this very quickly started to look like a return of the ‘strategic denial’ security paradigm of the Cold War years based on a traditional concept of security emphasising the grand strategy of great powers and countering a perceived military threat.

In early January 2018, the Australian Minister for International Development, Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, told the media that China’s influence was ‘clearly growing’ in the Pacific and Chinese economic assistance was constructing ‘useless buildings’ and ‘roads to nowhere’—intimating that there were other motives behind this assistance.⁴⁹ The Samoan Prime Minister, Tuilaepa Sailele, said the Australian minister’s comments were ‘quite insulting to the leaders of Pacific Island neighbours’ and could ‘destroy the excellent relationships existing between Australia and the Pacific Island neighbours’.⁵⁰ In the face of protests from China and Pacific island leaders, Australian foreign minister Julie Bishop moved to quell the diplomatic upset with an assurance that Australian government policy remained that of working in the Pacific ‘with a wide range of development partners, including China, in pursuit of the goal of eliminating poverty in our region and globally’. But she also went some way in supporting her colleague’s criticism of Chinese economic assistance by saying that the Australian Government ‘welcomes investment in developing nations in the Pacific that supports sustainable economic growth, and *which does not impose onerous debt burdens on regional governments*’ (my emphasis).⁵¹

49 Primrose Riordan, ‘Coalition Attack on China over Pacific Aid’, *The Australian*, 9 January 2018.

50 Bruce Hill, ‘Samoan PM Hits Back at Australia’s “Insulting” Criticism of China’s Aid Program in Pacific’, *Pacific Beat*, ABC News, 12 January 2018.

51 Amy Remeikis, ‘Julie Bishop in Balancing Act after Colleague Criticises China’s Pacific Aid’, *The Guardian*, 11 January 2018.

In April 2018, the issue arose again, but this time it was presented not as a development issue around debt burden but rather as a security issue concerning possible Chinese military basing in the Pacific islands on the back of an assumption that indebtedness to China would lead to a ‘debt trap’ (a debt for equity swap). It began with *Sydney Morning Herald* defence and national security correspondent David Wroe making the dramatic claim that

China has approached Vanuatu about building a permanent military presence in the South Pacific in a globally significant move that could see the rising superpower sail warships on Australia’s doorstep.⁵²

The specific claim was that the new Luganville wharf on the northern island of Espiritu Santo, funded by Chinese loans, had the potential to service naval vessels. Wroe argued that ‘while no formal proposals have been put to Vanuatu’s government, senior [Australian] security officials believe Beijing’s plans could culminate in a full military base’. Wroe also introduced the more general claim that

Australian intelligence and security figures, along with their partners in the United States and New Zealand, have been watching with concern as Beijing deepens its influence with Pacific islands governments through infrastructure building and loans.

While no evidence of actual Chinese plans was adduced to support the conjecture, these claims quickly became the basis of an alarmist response from other commentators in Australian media outlets and think tanks.⁵³

Vanuatu’s foreign minister Ralph Reganvanu responded that these claims were false: ‘[N]o-one in the Vanuatu Government has ever talked about a Chinese military base in Vanuatu of any sort’.⁵⁴ Pacific commentators also pointed out the fallacies underlying this reported position of Australian senior security officials and the subsequent commentary by security specialists. For example, James Batley, a former senior Australian diplomat to Solomon Islands and Vanuatu and former RAMSI coordinator, called this commentary ‘hyperventilation’, while ANU economist Matthew

52 David Wroe, ‘China Eyes Vanuatu Military Base in Plan with Global Ramifications’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 April 2018.

53 See Sally Whyte, ‘Australia Must Step Up if China Starts Military Build Up in Vanuatu’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 April 2018; Tom Steinfort, ‘The China Syndrome’, *60 Minutes*, Sydney: Nine Entertainment Co., 17 June 2018.

54 ABC News, ‘Chinese Military Base in Pacific Would be of “Great Concern”, Turnbull tells Vanuatu’, *Pacific Beat*, ABC News, 10 April 2018.

Dornan called much of the reporting ‘hysterical’.⁵⁵ Dornan also questions some of the key assumptions underlying the worst-case analysis of Australia’s reporting. For example, the contract between the Chinese Government and the Vanuatu Government did not actually have a debt for equity provision as claimed; nor was Vanuatu’s overall indebtedness at risky levels as claimed.⁵⁶

Despite this critique from Pacific specialists, and the denials of the Vanuatu Government, Australia nevertheless moved quickly to promote a new policy approach to regional security based on these premises. In a style reminiscent of the strategic denial paradigm during the Cold War, prime minister Malcolm Turnbull warned Pacific island governments—and presumably China—that Australia ‘would view with great concern the establishment of any foreign military bases in those Pacific island countries and neighbours of ours’.⁵⁷ Foreign minister Bishop continued the language of strategic denial during her visit to Micronesian island capitals in early June, reportedly asserting that ‘we regard the Pacific as our part of the world, this is our region where we can make a difference’.⁵⁸

The new policy approach quickly moved from diplomatic statements to actions. After meeting Vanuatu’s Prime Minister, Charlot Salwai, in London, prime minister Turnbull announced that the Australian Government would be funding an undersea fibre-optic cable connecting Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea to the internet, cutting out the Chinese company Huawei, which was about to fund these projects.⁵⁹ Australia extended this offer to support high-speed undersea cable to Vanuatu during Salwai’s visit to Australia in late June.⁶⁰ At the Commonwealth leaders’ meeting in London, Australia was reportedly successful in ‘encouraging Britain to extend its aid, trade and diplomatic influence in the south Pacific after it leaves the EU to help counter Chinese influence in the region’.⁶¹ The United Kingdom announced it

55 James Batley, *Review: Safeguarding Australia’s Security Interests through Closer Pacific Ties*, Sydney: Lowy Institute, 27 April 2018; Matthew Dornan, ‘Australia’s Pacific Island Myopia’, *The Diplomat*, 13 July 2018.

56 Dornan, ‘Australia’s Pacific Island Myopia’.

57 ABC News, ‘Chinese Military Base in Pacific Would be of “Great Concern”’.

58 Primrose Riordan, ‘Julie Bishop’s Message for China: Pacific is Australia’s Patch’, *The Australian*, 13 June 2018.

59 Latika Bourke, ‘UK to Open Diplomatic Posts in the Pacific, Citing Security Concerns’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 April 2018.

60 Catherine Graue, ‘Federal Government Flags Willingness to Help Vanuatu with High-Speed Undersea Internet Cable’, *Pacific Beat*, ABC News, 27 June 2018.

61 Dennis Shanahan, ‘Turnbull Welcomes British Initiatives in South Pacific Region’, *The Australian*, 21 April 2018.

would be opening diplomatic posts in Vanuatu, Samoa and Tonga. In the following month, US marines joined Australian warships to visit Pacific island ports as part of military exercises. Later in June, foreign minister Bishop reportedly announced that the Australian Government would ‘compete with China’s infrastructure development spree in Australia’s neighbourhood to help ensure small nations are not saddled with debts that threatens [sic] their sovereignty’.⁶²

Although New Zealand commentary did not exhibit the same level of ‘hyperventilation’, it was evident that, in announcing its ‘Pacific reset’ foreign policy in March 2018, its foreign minister was influenced by a perception of the security implications of rising Chinese involvement in the region. Foreign minister Winston Peters emphasised the ‘strategic anxieties’ created by the fact that ‘the Pacific has ... become an increasingly contested strategic space, no longer neglected by Great Power ambition, and so Pacific Island leaders have more options’. He concluded that ‘there has never been a time since 1945 when Australia and New Zealand need to work together more closely in the Pacific’.⁶³ New Zealand’s Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, was, however, careful not to jump to conclusions in her response to the *Sydney Morning Herald’s* claim that China had approached Vanuatu about ‘establishing a permanent military presence on the island nation’. She replied that she was not aware of this proposal, but ‘what I can say is ... that New Zealand is opposed to the militarisation of the Pacific generally’.⁶⁴

By June 2018, then, Australia was promoting a framing of regional security that was very different from the human security paradigm being promoted by the Pacific island leaders. Its position had begun to look very much like the Cold War strategic denial doctrine. This is a traditional geopolitical view of security—one of preventing an assumed possibility of a military base that might threaten Australian security interests. It is, then, a regional security concept built on the security interests of Australia and projected on to the regional community rather than one shared by other members of that regional community. This conceptualisation of threat leads to a regional conception of security governance that is necessarily

62 David Wroe, ‘Australia will Compete with China to Save Pacific Sovereignty, Says Bishop’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 June 2018.

63 Winston Peters, “‘Shifting the Dial’: Eyes Wide Open, Pacific Reset”, Speech delivered to the Lowy Institute, Sydney, 2 March 2018.

64 Fergus Hunter and David Wroe, ‘New Zealand Opposed to Militarization in the Pacific: Jacinda Ardern’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 April 2018.

hegemonic. As operational policy, the attempt to deny Chinese military involvement becomes an attempt to deny the interests of several Pacific island states committing to loans from China. As in the Cold War, when strategic denial of the Soviet Union became an attempt to deny Pacific island states' economic engagement with the Soviets, such a policy of denial is obviously bound to create tension with Pacific island governments.

First, it offends Pacific governments by assuming that they have no discernment or agency in relation to their decisions about Chinese loans. With an obvious reference to recent warnings from Australia and New Zealand, Samoan Prime Minister Sailele said in late August 2018 that

some might say there is a patronising nuance, believing Pacific nations did not know what they were doing, or were incapable of reaping benefits of close relationships with countries that will be in the region for some time to come.⁶⁵

Second, it asks the Pacific island countries to forgo an opportunity for economic assistance that they greatly value. The leaders of those states recognising China—Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands—have all issued statements saying how valuable the Chinese loans are, providing infrastructure development not generally available from other donors. Cook Islands Prime Minister, Henry Puna, argued that 'from a Cook Islands perspective, the Pacific need not be a zero sum game'. He asserted that 'we have partnered with China as their interests into the Pacific have grown and it's been a most mutually beneficial relationship'.⁶⁶ In an attempt to reassure Australia, Papua New Guinea's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Rimbink Pato, was reported as saying that

Papua New Guinea would continue looking for aid and loans from nations like China, particularly to develop infrastructure ... the country's long history of receiving Australian aid taught it how to assess and manage foreign funding.⁶⁷

65 Stephen Dziedzic, 'Samoan Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele Hits Out at Climate Change Sceptics during Fiery Speech', *ABC News Online*, 31 August 2018, available from: www.abc.net.au/news/2018-08-31/samoan-prime-minister-hits-out-at-climate-change-sceptics/10185142.

66 Henry Puna, 'The Cook Islands, NZ and Free Association: Speech by Hon. Henry Puna, Prime Minister of the Cook Islands', New Zealand Institute for International Affairs, Wellington, 4 April 2018, p. 4, available from: www.nziaa.org.nz/Portals/285/documents/lists/259/PM%20Puna%20-%20NZIIA%20speech%20FINAL%20delivered%204%20April%202018.pdf.

67 Eric Tlozek, 'Australia Should Not Fear Chinese Influence in Papua New Guinea, Government Says', *ABC News Online*, 23 January 2018, available from: www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-23/australia-should-not-fear-chinese-influence-in-png/9349140.

Third, a tension arises because the denial policy expects a level of forbearance on the part of Pacific island states not exercised by Australia and New Zealand. According to a 2018 report, KPMG estimates that ‘Australia remains the second largest recipient country of accumulated Chinese investment, after the US, with USD 99 billion since 2008’.⁶⁸ *Bloomberg Business* claims that ‘Australia is the most China-dependent economy in the developed world’, with 35 per cent of its exports going to China.⁶⁹

Fourth, as in the Cold War, this will be seen as an attempt to create a two-tier, hierarchical form of regional security governance in which the Pacific island states are expected to meet regional norms that do not apply to Australia and New Zealand.

What, then, were the implications of this regional strategic denial doctrine for the negotiation of the new regional security arrangements under Biketawa Plus? Some commentators mistakenly saw the Biketawa Plus Declaration negotiations as an Australian initiative to shore up the region and to exclude unwelcome powers—notably, China.⁷⁰ This is, however, a misreading of its history. As James Batley points out, the negotiation of a new regional security arrangement, Biketawa Plus, has its origins ‘in the minds of thoughtful Pacific islanders following the conclusion of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands in mid-2017’.⁷¹ Nevertheless, there was an expectation that the Nauru PIF meeting would be a contest between the China-threat focus of an Australian strategic denial policy approach and the human security orientation of the Pacific island leaders centred on climate change as the priority security concern.⁷²

68 KPMG, *Demystifying Chinese Investment in Australia: June 2018*, Melbourne: KPMG Australia, available from: home.kpmg.com/au/en/home/insights/2018/06/demystifying-chinese-investment-in-australia-june-2018.html.

69 Michael Heath, ‘Australia’s Economy Has a Lot to Lose from US–China Trade War’, *Bloomberg*, 23 March 2018, available from: www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-03-23/-very-awkward-spot-in-u-s-china-firing-line-for-aussie-economy.

70 See, for example, Primrose Riordan, ‘Pacific Pact to Strengthen Regional Security and Counter China Push’, *The Australian*, 6 July 2018.

71 Batley, *Review*.

72 See, for example, Jennifer Hayward-Jones, ‘Diverging Regional Priorities at the Pacific Islands Forum’, *Australian Outlook*, Canberra: Australian Institute of International Affairs, 3 September 2018, available from: www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/diverging-regional-priorities-at-pacific-islands-forum/.

The outcome of this contest of regional diplomacy over the future governance of regional security is the Boe Declaration.⁷³ The main commitments in this declaration reflect the Pacific island countries' 'human security' position as the conceptual basis for regional security governance. The preamble recognises:

The importance we placed on an expanded concept of security inclusive of human security, humanitarian assistance, prioritising environmental security, and regional cooperation in building resilience to disasters and climate change.

In paragraph (vii) of the declaration, there is further indication of the list of security issues falling under the expanded concept. It includes human security (including humanitarian assistance), environmental and resource security, transnational crime and cybersecurity.

The most significant expression of the dominance of the Pacific island countries' position is the 'reaffirmation' that

climate change remains the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific and our commitment to progress the implementation of the Paris Agreement.⁷⁴

This outcome could not be further from Australia's preferred position, which is reflected in the contemporary debate within the governing party about whether to withdraw from the Paris Agreement.

There is no mention of limits on military basing or strategic denial of other powers. The main influence of the Australian position presumably appears in the commitment to reaffirm the 'importance of the rules-based international order' and to strengthen national security strategies through training (paragraph viii). The commitment to 'respect and assert the sovereign right of every Member to conduct its national affairs free of external interference and coercion' (paragraph iv) could apply to interference by Australia and New Zealand as much as to China and thus should not necessarily be seen as evidence of Australian influence on the text in this regard. The tone of the document is suggestive of the

73 PIFS, 'Annex 1: Boe Declaration on Regional Security [Boe Declaration]', in *Leaders' Communiqué: Forty-Ninth Pacific Islands Forum, Yaren, Nauru, 3–6 September 2018*, Suva: PIFS, 2018.

74 'Draft Declaration', reproduced in Fergus Hunter, 'Pacific Nations Push Morrison Government to Pledge Support for Paris Climate Accord', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 August 2018, para. (1).

need for Pacific island control of and assertion over regional security governance. Significantly, the preamble recognises ‘the need to strengthen regional security cooperation and collective action through the assertion of *Our Will* and the voices of *Our Pacific Peoples*’.⁷⁵

Australia’s pursuit of a strategic denial strategy aimed at China has focused instead on creating new regional institutional arrangements outside the Boe Declaration. Before the Nauru PIF meeting, Australia had announced its intention to establish an Australia Pacific Security College with the objective of training a regionwide coterie of like-minded officials in security analysis.⁷⁶ The design summary asserts that the Biketawa Plus regional security declaration will be a ‘key driver’ for the college. The second initiative—‘welcomed’ by the Pacific leaders at the Nauru meeting—was the creation of a Pacific Fusion Centre. This agency

will build on current regional frameworks to strengthen information sharing and maritime domain awareness, to better inform security responses to some of the main threats outlined in the Boe Declaration, such as illegal fishing, drugs trafficking and other transnational crimes.⁷⁷

The third proposal is a joint initiative with the Fiji Government and relates to the redevelopment of Fiji’s Blackrock Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Camp into ‘a regional hub for police and peacekeeping training and pre-deployment preparation’.⁷⁸ These regional initiatives complement Canberra’s new bilateral diplomatic and economic strategies aimed at moving Pacific island states away from Chinese loans and influence: its counter bid to provide undersea fibre-optic cables for Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands; the development of a joint Australia–Papua New Guinea naval base on Manus Island;⁷⁹ the increase in military visits; and the encouragement of increased Western diplomatic presence in Pacific island countries.

75 *ibid.*, Preamble.

76 DFAT, *Design Summary for the Australia Pacific Security College*, Canberra: DFAT, 1 August 2018, available from: dfat.gov.au/about-us/business-opportunities/Pages/design-summary-for-the-australia-pacific-security-college.aspx.

77 PIFS, *Leaders’ Communiqué: Forty-Ninth Pacific Islands Forum, Yaren, Nauru, 3–6 September 2018*, Suva: PIFS, 2018, para. 45.

78 Malcolm Turnbull, ‘Regional Training Hub for Fiji’, Media release, 22 August 2018, available from: www.malcolmtturnbull.com.au/media/regional-training-hub-for-fiji#.

79 Ben Packham, ‘Move to Head Off China with Australian Base on PNG’, *The Australian*, 20 September 2018; and Greg Sheridan and Cameron Stewart, ‘Top Defence Threat Now Lies in the South Pacific from China’, *The Australian*, 22 September 2018.

Australia's preferred regional order is one in which it is the leading external security partner to Pacific island states and the undue influence of other metropolitan powers, and particularly China, has been denied. It has also been concerned over many years to ensure that regional commitments on climate change do not go against Australia's interest in doing very little to lower carbon emissions in its own economy. The outcomes of the regional diplomacy at Nauru, and subsequent developments, suggest Australia has failed on both these counts. The development of a joint naval base with Papua New Guinea on Manus Island has taken Australia's strategic denial policy to a much higher level than it promoted during the Cold War in relation to the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, it is clear that it has not had the desired outcome. Key Pacific states such as Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Samoa have increased their engagement with China and have insisted on their right to do so. And, as we have seen, the Pacific has succeeded in making climate change the key priority of the Boe Declaration.

Conclusion

In the first two decades after the Cold War, Australia and New Zealand sought to reframe Pacific regional security to emphasise political stability and good governance inside the state rather than countering external military threats. They saw poor leadership, poor governance, political instability and state failure as making the region vulnerable to nontraditional transnational security threats such as terrorism, drug running, corruption, fraud, money laundering, tax havens and human trafficking. The preferred security solution involved tightening regional security governance and regional borders by establishing regional norms concerning good governance, institutionalising these norms through new regional structures, with the FRSC at the apex, and the promotion of regional harmonisation of laws enforcing border security. As we have seen, these commitments were all expressed in regional treaties and declarations.

This reframing challenged the conception of sovereignty, and the norm of non-intervention, on which the Pacific regional community had been formed in the early 1970s. This new security framing was inspired by a changing global order as well as changing political developments within the region. This was a hegemonic project, led by Australia and New Zealand but with New Zealand taking the lead over the establishment of the Biketawa regime. Taken together with the promotion of the new

regional economic order, this effort to build a regional security order inevitably created a hierarchical regional system within the PIF. Despite its presentation as a regional consensus, it was clear who was setting the agenda, who was responsible for the new dominant conceptualisations of security and who took the dominant role in actual interventions.

However, in the decade since 2010, the Pacific states began to collectively assert themselves diplomatically. We examine this ‘new Pacific diplomacy’ in the next chapter. The key point for our present purposes is that the issues on which the Pacific leaders had shared concerns about promoting included climate change, ocean management, sustainable development and humanitarian assistance. By 2017, the Pacific leaders started to bring these together conceptually as a ‘human security’ paradigm as the basis for reframing ‘regional security’ in the Biketawa Plus negotiations.

Meanwhile, as we have seen, from early 2018, Australian and New Zealand concerns about Chinese influence in the Pacific, which had been evident since 2009, began to be the key frame through which Canberra and Wellington viewed Pacific regional security. This was sparked by the supposed revelation by Australian security officials who claimed that China was planning a military base in Vanuatu on the back of growing indebtedness. The reemergence of strategic denial thinking in Canberra, in particular, and its expression in its Pacific policy, involves an attempt to impose hegemonic regional security governance based on two tiers of rights and responsibilities within the Pacific regional community—familiar from the Cold War. However, as we have seen, this intention has come up against a very determined Pacific leadership, focused on regional self-determination and ready to contest hegemonic regionalism and promote an alternative framing of Pacific regional security.

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