Acknowledgement

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Note

Tarcisius Tara Kabutaulaka could not attend the conference in time. He delivered his paper electronically.

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Introduction

Marion Struck-Garbe, Chairwoman, German Pacific Network

The military intervention in the Solomon Islands in July 2003, which was conducted by an Australian-led multilateral South Pacific force, has to date been the most prominent expression of a long-term reorientation of Australian politics in the Pacific region. The Australian government justified its massive interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign neighbour state on the grounds that the Solomon Islands, as a "failed state", might potentially serve as a safe haven for international terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking and possibly could thereby endanger Australia's national security.

On the one hand, the Australian government encouraged the Solomon Islands government to request assistance. The Solomon Islands government, badly shaken by several years of internal violent conflict, saw itself incapable of achieving and maintaining security on its own. On the other hand, Australia’s policy neatly dovetailed with international public discourse, which is gradually making military interventions appear necessary and legitimate in fighting global terrorism.

In the eyes of the Australian government, the intervention in the Solomon Islands proved to be a success and led to the re-stabilisation of the country. At least that is what it looks like on the surface. It remains to be seen whether this situation can be sustained. Meanwhile, the Australian government has made it quite clear that it is pursuing a new regional order by strengthening its presence in other Pacific states (first of all in neighbouring Papua New Guinea) and by intensifying its efforts toward an integration of the South Pacific under Australian leadership; for example, by activating the Pacific Islands Forum and the Pacific Agreement on closer economic relations. This new political order is intended to benefit Australia's national security interests and global security on the one hand and to lead to the re-stabilisation of particular South Pacific states on the other.

Thus a fundamental change in Australian policy towards the South Pacific has taken place: Australia's attitude has shifted from restrained indifference to a proactive willingness to interfere in the affairs of other South Pacific nations.

The Pacific Network of Germany took the occasion of this development to organize a conference on

"**Australia's New Foreign Policy in the Pacific Area**".

The Department of Indonesian and Oceanic Languages at the Asia-Africa-Institute of the University of Hamburg hosted this conference from 27th to 28th of November 2004. The conference comprised a broad range of speakers from universities, NGOs, journalism and politics coming from various Pacific countries, Australia and Germany to discuss the new trends of Australia's foreign policy and their consequences.

The fascinating contributions of the speakers and participants made this forum to one of the rare occasions in Germany to learn more about 'Down-Under' and to view the South Pacific beyond the Hula-Horizon. The Pacific Network sees this conference as a kind of kick-off and hopes to contribute to the launching of a broader discussion on the more or less political blind spot - the Pacific region.

The Pacific Network is proud to document the presented papers in this reader and likes to thank once again anyone who contributed to the success of this conference.

Australia's new interventionism in the Southwest Pacific

Sinclair Dinnen, Australian National University, Canberra

Australia's New Interventionism

2003 marked a significant change in Australia's relations with the island Pacific, including Papua New Guinea. Since gaining independence in the 1970s, the island states of the Southwest Pacific have been left to control their own political and economic affairs. While providing substantial amounts of bilateral aid, Australia has been sensitive to charges of neo-colonialism and interference with national sovereignty. All this has changed, however, with the Howard government's adoption of a distinctly more robust and interventionist stance. The primary objective is to enhance security and stability in troubled Pacific states. Although poverty reduction continues to be the broad goal, the Australian aid program is being gradually calibrated to reflect this changing approach. In practice, this also entails the deployment of growing numbers of Australian personnel in key government agencies in recipient countries.

The two principal manifestations of this new policy have been the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) in mid-2003 and the proposed Enhanced Cooperation Program (ECP) to Papua New Guinea. Australia has also agreed to provide Police Commissioners to both Fiji and Nauru. Nauru, which is effectively bankrupt, is the subject of intensified engagement. Another aspect of the new approach has been a renewed focus on strengthening the institutions of regional governance. In August 2003, Canberra secured the appointment of a former Australian diplomat as the new secretary general of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat with a mandate to reform and invigorate this body. This reversed a long-standing convention that only Pacific islanders were eligible for appointment. John Howard has made clear that future Australian aid to the Pacific will be linked to efforts by recipient governments to improve standards of governance and combat corruption. The new hands-on approach has inevitably ruffled feathers, particularly among an older generation of independence leaders who resent Canberra's stridency and the perceived threat this represents to national sovereignty.

However, among other observers, including many ordinary Pacific islanders, Canberra's re-engagement is something to be welcomed. It provides a rare opportunity to assist regional governments address the diverse and growing challenges they have faced in recent years. Indeed, if Australia's new commitment is sustained, it provides the most important opportunity for broad-ranging reform since the era of decolonisation in the 1970s. Of course, much depends on what kind of changes is being proposed and whose interests are being promoted. While Canberra has its own national interest and security agenda to pursue, achieving effective and sustainable reform in the island Pacific requires active participation and ownership on the part of the governments and citizenry of the countries concerned.

What lies behind the changes in Australian policy?

Concerns about Aid Effectiveness

The growing critique of Australian development assistance to the region has had a major impact in Canberra. This critique involves an unlikely convergence between critics on both the left and right of the political spectrum. On the left, critics from within recipient countries and Australia have derided the aid program as 'boomerang aid', whereby the principal beneficiaries are the Australian companies and consultants who manage and implement AusAID projects. On the right, there is the work of conservative economists such as Helen Hughes and Peter

Bauer[1], both working for the Sydney-based think-tank, the Centre for Independent Studies. Hughes's 2003 report, *Why Aid has Failed the Pacific*, received widespread publicity and struck a sympathetic chord in senior government circles. In it, she argues that Australian aid has failed to deliver on its promises and, moreover, that it is implicated in the dynamics of political and economic dysfunction in the region by fuelling corruption and engendering dependency among recipient states. The reality of aid and its impacts is, of course, significantly more complex and diverse than these critiques imply. There have been successes as well as failures. Likewise the potential link between aid and government corruption has diminished with the move from budgetary support to tied aid. The case for simply ending aid is unlikely to find much support even among the most ardent critics in the recipient countries. At the same time, few would deny that the Australian aid program can be, and needs to be, improved in terms of its practical outcomes.

The Changing Strategic Environment

The single most important factor in changing Canberra's thinking about the region has been the dramatically changed international strategic environment since the 9/11 attacks in the United States and the Bali bombings. Having aligned itself closely with the Bush administration in Washington, Canberra has adopted the 'war on terror' as the principal lens for viewing issues of conflict and instability in the region. Within this expanded concept of security, the notion of 'failed' or 'failing' states has become pivotal to the identification of perceived threats to Australian security interests and the mobilisation of preventive and remedial responses.

The case for intervention in the Solomon Islands was set within this broader strategic framework and was articulated most clearly in the influential report published by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) in June 2003[2]. Solomon Islands is identified as a failing state and the report provides vivid warning of the risk of its reversion into "a kind of post-modern badlands, ruled by criminals and governed by violence" (ASPI 2003:13). State failure in the Solomon Islands would, in ASPI's view, render it susceptible to the predatory and violent activities of local warlords, transnational crime syndicates and maybe even terrorist organisations. Such a scenario would not only be catastrophic for the Solomon Islands, it would pose a direct threat to Australia's own security interests. The risk of state failure in our immediate neighbourhood has become the basis of the new security paradigm. Within this paradigm, the focus is squarely upon the manifestations of state failure and the threat these present to Australia rather than upon the internal dynamics of failure in the country concerned.

The ASPI report also provides a regional perspective, noting that while the Solomon Islands state is closest to "total collapse", some of its Melanesian neighbours are not that far behind. The next cab off the rank, in the view of many in Canberra, is Papua New Guinea, Australia's largest and most challenging Pacific neighbour. There have been longstanding concerns about rising levels of financial mismanagement, corruption, political instability, and law and order, in PNG. These concerns, in combination with the renewed focus on regional security and the success of the first phase of RAMSI, culminated in Canberra's offer of a substantial package of enhanced assistance to the PNG government late last year, subsequently agreed to at the Ministerial Forum in Adelaide in December 2003.

Difficulties with the concept of 'failed states' in Melanesian context

While the concept of 'failed' or 'failing' state is now used regularly in the Pacific islands context, there have been few attempts to ground it in the particular histories and socio-political contexts

[1] Peter Bauer 'Foreign aid: mends it or end it?', in Bauer, Siwatibau and Kasper (1991), *Aid and Development in the South Pacific*. Sydney: The Centre for Independent Studies.
[2] *Our Failing Neighbour: Australia and the Future of Solomon Islands*. Canberra: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2003.

of the region's post-colonial states. It has become a convenient device for justifying various forms of external engagement rather than an instrument of analysis. The notion of a 'failed' or 'collapsed' state assumes that at some point it was functioning properly, presumably in a manner similar to the 'successful' states of Australia and New Zealand. However, even a cursory reading of the short history of states in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, or Vanuatu, serves to dispel this assumption. The Melanesian state has never operated effectively in the way it has in Australia and New Zealand. On the contrary, one can argue that the main problem of state in these Melanesian countries is that it has yet to be properly built. We are still talking about the nascent stages of state and nation building in countries with a short experience of centralised administration, among the highest levels of internal fragmentation and social diversity in the world, and, as yet, little sense of common identity.

Beneath many aspects of today's challenges of governance in the Melanesian countries lies the lack of fit between the introduced institutions of the modern nation state and the multiplicity of indigenous micro-polities and social forms that continue to adapt and exert influence at all levels of 'modern' society. The consolidation of state power remains incomplete and has been resisted intermittently at local levels in parts of Solomon Islands, PNG, and Vanuatu, during both colonial and post-independence periods. 'National' politics continues to be grounded in localism rather than national interest. Almost 30 years after independence, the socio-political realities in each of these countries remain relentlessly local. Following on from this, the challenge of state building in Solomon Islands or PNG is not to simply rebuild that which has ostensibly 'failed' or 'collapsed'. Indeed, to do so might be to simply invite future 'failure'. What is needed is a different approach to state building that addresses directly the complexities of trying to build a unitary state and sense of 'nation' in such topographically challenging and socially diverse environments as those found in SI and PNG. This cannot be achieved quickly or simply engineered through a massive infusion of external resources and expertise. Nor can it be accomplished by focusing exclusively on state structures. It is the dysfunctional character of state-society relations that needs to be addressed if sustainable improvement is to be achieved.

The Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) and the Enhanced Cooperation Program (ECP) in Papua New Guinea

RAMSI

RAMSI was deployed in July 2003 in response to an appeal from the Solomon Islands Prime Minister, Sir Allan Kemakeza. What began as an ethnic conflict had degenerated, since the Townsville Peace Agreement in October 2000, into the effective capture and paralysis the SI state by a small cohort of armed ex-militants, including renegade police officers and corrupt leaders. Australia's response was to mobilize a regional assistance mission led by a police contingent of some 330 officers, mainly from Australia but with participation from other Forum member states. The Participating Police Force (PPF) was initially supplemented by around 1,800 military personnel from the region, again mainly Australian. The military force has been gradually reduced as the security situation has improved. Restoring law and order was the immediate priority to be followed by a comprehensive reform program aimed at stabilizing government finances, balancing the budget, and reviving investor confidence, as well as strengthening the law and justice sector and rebuilding the SI police force. It has been estimated that the more ambitious aims of the mission will take up to 10 years to achieve.

As mentioned earlier, the initial phase of RAMSI has gone remarkably well. A significant number of the illegally held high-powered weapons have been surrendered or confiscated. The most notorious former militants are now behind bars and peace has returned to Honiara and other areas affected by the recent conflict. RAMSI's efforts to cleanse the SI police of criminal and corrupt elements have resulted in the resignation or dismissal of over 25 percent of serving officers. With the restoration of law and order, the mission has now entered its second and

more challenging phase involving the implementation of comprehensive governance and economic reform.
While popular support for RAMSI remains high, there are some issues that need to be addressed if the mission's longer-term objectives are to be achieved. RAMSI's leadership is well aware of most of these issues and is seeking to address them. The first relates to a concern expressed by many Solomon Islanders that RAMSI has been less zealous in prosecuting cases of high level corruption than it has in relation to criminal activities by former militants. This, in turn, has fuelled a belief in some quarters that RAMSI inadvertently provides a cloak of legitimacy for corrupt leaders, and a government, that have limited legitimacy in the eyes of many Solomon Islanders. For its part, RAMSI officials have expressed frustrations at the lack of reliable evidence on which to base prosecutions in these cases and have regularly called for members of the public to provide relevant evidence.

Another broad concern relates to what appears to be the limited opportunities for ordinary Solomon Islanders to participate in, and influence, the work of RAMSI. The sheer scale of RAMSI in terms of the resources at its disposal and the range of activities it is involved in underlie its popular image as the dominant force in post-conflict Solomon Islands. Without the active participation and engagement of Solomon Islanders, there is a risk that RAMSI will simply reinforce dependence on external assistance. Solomon Islands' academic, Tarcisius Kabutaulaka, points out that RAMSI's dominance could lead to ether a debilitating dependency or, alternatively, a perception of foreign occupation (Kabutaulaka 2004).[3] He notes the popular saying "*weitem olketa RAMSI bae kam stretim*" ("wait for RAMSI, they'll fix it"), as an expression of this growing dependency. The very prominent stance adopted by senior RAMSI and Australian High Commission officials in opposing the Honiara government's award of a pay increase to public servants in January 2004 bordered on political interference and attracted criticism in both Solomon Islands and Australia (Wielders 2004).[4] There is a thin line between RAMSI's dominant position in post-conflict Solomon Islands and perceptions that it is actually the 'real' government in control of political and economic decision-making. Such perceptions cannot, of course, be resolved by RAMSI alone. There is a clear need for decisive leadership among Solomon Islanders and a much more active participation in the reform process.

RAMSI's post-conflict recovery work has understandably focused on key state institutions, such as the police and finance ministries. In the longer-term, it is also important to engage with non-state entities that continue to exercise considerable influence over the lives of ordinary Solomon Islanders. These include the churches, NGOs and other agencies of civil society. Building social and economic capacity at local levels is a critical aspect of nation building in Solomon Islands. As Kabutaulaka puts it, "To achieve sustainable peace and rebuild Solomon Islands there is a need to strengthen both state and non-state entities. This is especially important in a plural society where the state will always share power with other organizations" (2004:2). The work of the Australian-supported Solomon Islands Community Peace and Restoration Fund is a good example of how this engagement with communities can be nurtured.

There is also the question of what kind of state system is most appropriate to Solomon Islands' present and future needs. The highly centralized model inherited at independence is implicated in many aspects of recent problems. While there are serious flaws in current proposals to adopt a federal system, reform of the existing framework of government, in particular, relations between the political centre and the island provinces, needs to be prioritised. It is also important to ensure adequate levels of consultation and debate about the economic and public sector reforms being implemented under the auspices of RAMSI. Reforms that accentuate existing divisions between regions and individuals and that fail to improve access to services and economic opportunities among the bulk of the rural population will lead to growing levels of discontent and could result in future conflict.

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[3] Tarcisius Tara Kabutaulaka, "'Failed State' and the War on Terror: Intervention in Solomon Islands". Honolulu: East West Centre, Asia Pacific Issues series, No. 72, March 2004, 1-8.
[4] Iris Wielders, "Australia's 'interventions' in Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea in a Global Perspective". Unpublished seminar paper, January 2004.

ECP

The Enhanced Cooperation Program in Papua New Guinea includes additional Australian assistance to policing, law and justice, border management, as well as economic and public sector management. Up to 230 Australian police officers will be deployed in Port Moresby, Lae, Mount Hagen, and along the Highlands Highway, as well as up to 20 officers in Bougainville. 400 new PNG police will also be recruited under the program. The policing component has been costed at $800 million over a five-year period and is additional to the existing $350 million a year Australian aid program to PNG. While many of the civilian officials are already at work, the deployment of Australian police has been delayed owing to disagreement between Canberra and Port Moresby over their conditions of employment. This has centred on Canberra's insistence that they be provided with immunity from prosecution under PNG law and Port Moresby's refusal to grant blanket immunity. Power plays in the PNG parliament around a possible vote of no confidence against the government have resulted in further delays. The impasse over immunity now appears to have been resolved and, subject to the ratification of the new treaty by both Australian and PNG parliaments, Australian police should be in position within a few months.

Some members of PNGs political elite have expressed reservations about Canberra's new approach and, in particular, about parallels drawn between Papua New Guinea and the 'failing state' in Solomon Islands. Although there are similarities, there are also important differences between the two countries. There has been no armed takeover in Port Moresby and the forcible ousting of a democratically elected government. While the state and the RPNGC may be weak, they have certainly not collapsed. Likewise, PNG's well-known law and order problems are not the result of a major internal conflict. PNG has long been the largest single recipient of Australian development assistance and a significant amount of this has been directed at the law and justice sector and, in particular, the police. Although there have been some improvements, the otherwise disappointing results of almost 15 years of Australian aid to the PNG police has been another important contributor to the formulation of the ECP.

There is no denying that PNG faces major challenges of financial management, economic development, governance, corruption, political stability, and law and order. While some have taken exception to Canberra's new stridency, a younger generation of political leaders and many ordinary Papua New Guineans see the offer of additional assistance in more positive terms, as a chance to make a real start in addressing long neglected problems. In many respects, the recent friction between Canberra and Port Moresby has been more about style than substance. There is broad agreement on both sides that the Australian aid program can be made more effective. The ECP is no panacea but it does offer much-needed assistance in areas requiring urgent attention.

As with RAMSI in Solomon Islands, there are a number of broad issues that can be raised in respect of the ECP. Much of the marketing of the ECP to the domestic Australian audience has focused on the perceived threats to Australian security presented by its lawless northern neighbour. This has included an emphasis on PNG's alleged susceptibility to transnational crime and terrorism. While this may be an effective way of selling the program in Australia, it is less convincing in the PNG context. Threats of international crime and terrorism in PNG are dwarfed by more pressing internal security matters. PNG's 'law and order' problems are complex and diverse. They are not simply a reflection of the weakness of the law and justice system. While that system, particularly policing, needs to be strengthened, there is also a need to address some of the underlying issues that are contributing to high levels of internal conflict and lawlessness. This would include the larger processes of urbanization, empoverishment (particularly in rural areas), and marginalization of a significant proportion of PNG's young and rapidly growing population. In short, many of the so-called law and order problems are simply not susceptible to law and order solutions alone.
Papua New Guinea has already embarked on an ambitious program to reform its law and justice system and it is important that the additional support provided under the ECP be integrated into this existing reform program. The law and justice component of the ECP is highly state-

centric with its focus on strengthening the principal agencies of the formal justice system. PNG's new law and justice policy also emphasises the need to mobilise and strengthen community-based resources in order to strengthen dispute resolution and peacemaking at community levels. The community-orientation of this policy recognises that there are many examples of successful dispute resolution and peacemaking occurring in communities throughout PNG and that these provide an important foundation for building a more socially appropriate and sustainable justice system. The remarkable example of grassroots reconciliation and peacebuilding in post-conflict Bougainville provides the most dramatic example of this largely invisible and untapped resource. It is important that the assistance provided under the ECP does not detract from the longer-term goal of building justice capacity at both state and community levels.

Conclusions

Australia's renewed engagement with its troubled Melanesian neighbours is to be welcomed. It provides a unique window of opportunity for addressing some of the most outstanding challenges facing the governments and peoples of the region. Having embarked on this path, it is important that Canberra enters into genuine partnerships with recipient governments and the broader communities in the countries concerned. Achieving adequate levels of local ownership and participation is critical to the effectiveness and sustainability of these initiatives.

The 'whole of government' approach involved in these engagements also presents new challenges. There are now more bits of the Australian government involved in development assistance than at any time since independence. Issues of coordination are clearly critical, not least to avoid reproducing Canberra's bureaucratic rivalries in Honiara or Port Moresby. It is also clear that the Prime Minister's Office has adopted a lead role in the formulation and steering of Australia's new interventionism. This will have inevitably contributed to some tension and resentment, particularly among the traditional institutional providers of development assistance, notably AusAID and DFAT. It also means that key decisions are being made increasingly by those lacking extensive regional and development experience.

A further generic concern relates to the state-centric character of the assistance being offered under the auspices of these engagements. The weakness of state in Melanesia reflects, in part, the glaring disconnect between the realms of formal and non-formal governance. The latter continues to have considerable impact at all levels of modern society. 'Top-down' solutions do not have an impressive track record in the region. Indeed, some would argue that the traditional focus on state institutions has actually contributed to recent problems of instability and disorder. While addressing the deficiencies of particular state institutions is necessary, it is also important to engage with structures and processes at local and community levels.

A final point relates to the sustainability of these new engagements. With the deployment of increasing number of Australian personnel, the obvious question is what happens when they leave? Ensuring the long-term sustainability of these programs remains a major issue.

The Threat of Failed States. Australia and the global security discourse

Daniel Lambach, University of Marburg

Introduction

This essay is about the way that 'failed states' (or 'failing states', or, in a more abstract way, 'state failure') are being presented as threats to security by key policymakers in major Western nations. One of the points I would like to make is that this discourse serves to legitimize military intervention. Australia is an example of such a strategy, but it has some distinguishing features, which I will point out later. I will start, however, by giving two short definitions.

Definitions

First of all, what do I mean by 'failed states'? In academic research, a consensus has emerged that failure of a state means that this particular state is incapable of guaranteeing security, providing public goods and is generally unable to govern its territory and its people in any meaningful way. State institutions (the bureaucracy, the police, the military) have ceased to function or disappear entirely. The large majority of the country is not under the control of central state institutions, but under control of local leaders, strongmen, community authorities or warlords. One should be mindful, however, that this only is an academic definition – it is the 'political definition', i.e., the way the term is employed in political discourse that is of interest here.

Second of all, what do I mean by "global security discourse"? This is nothing that can be defined in an exact manner; 'discourse' implies a way of talking about an issue. You can't pin down the global discourse by looking at what one specific actor or another has said, you have to look at what they all are saying and try to identify general properties and modes of argument. At the same time, one should bear in mind that the global discourse is very much influenced by the kind of discourse in Western nations since these are the countries that have the power of setting the agenda and defining the terms of the debate in international relations.

That being said, I contend that there have been changes in the way security is being presented by major Western nations. I would like to highlight one particular aspect of this change and that is how failed states are being seen.
In the case of failed states, the discourse has definitely changed. And it is even possible to locate this change at a specific date: September 11th, 2001. Before September 11th, failed states were largely considered a humanitarian problem. They were seen as an obstacle to development, to democratic governance, to economic growth and to human rights. Failed states were generally not thought of as military or security problems, but as, at worst, regional problems but not a danger to national or global security.

Failed States Discourse after 9/11

This changed dramatically and, in some cases, quite quickly, after the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. On September 14th, 2001 the British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw proclaimed: "The international community must unite as never before to take determined, collective action against the threat that failing and failed states pose to global security."[5]
This kind of argument was quickly taken up in many other countries as well and over a rather short period of time became accepted wisdom within the international community. The most prominent statement of this point of view is contained in the National Security Strategy of the United States of September 2002: "The events of September 11, 2001, taught us that weak states, like Afghanistan, can pose as great a danger to our national interests as strong states.

[5] Straw, Jack (2001): The Free World Will Emerge Stronger. Statement to the House of Commons, 14 September 2001.

Poverty does not make poor people into terrorists and murderers. Yet poverty, weak institutions, and corruption can make weak states vulnerable to terrorist networks and drug cartels within their borders."[6]
To give a third example of the kind of rhetoric that is being used in relation to failed states, here is a statement by German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer: "Chaos, poverty and social instability form the breeding ground on which fundamentalism, hatred and terror thrive.
To tackle the new challenges, we need more than police and military missions. We need a long-term political and economic strategy which deals especially with the forgotten conflicts, the failing states, the black holes of lawlessness on our planet."[7] So, it is clear that failed states have been elevated from being a humanitarian problem to a threat to global security. I would like to take a short detour to examine these claims.

Failed States: Evaluating the Claims

Failed states are thought to be something of a root cause of many transnational ills, like terrorism, organized crime, money laundering, people smuggling and the drugs trade. Of course, these problems have been with us for more than just the three years since September 11th, but state failure provided policymakers with a kind of missing variable to tie together these disparate issues. This is usually couched in biological terms: failed states have been called 'breeding grounds', 'petri dishes' and 'incubators' of terrorism, crime, etc.
Out of all these, the strongest argument for failed states being security threats is of course the connection to terrorism. There, the theoretical logic is quite straightforward: failed states lack the ability to police and control large parts of their territory. Therefore, the argument claims, terrorist actors can find refuge in these stateless areas where they do not have to fear any lawful authority.
This view is informed by the case of Afghanistan, a failed state, which had become a base of operations for Al-Qaeda. The same logic has been applied to Somalia, which came under scrutiny during Operation Enduring Freedom after it was alleged that terrorist training camps were located inside the country. And indeed, the perpetrators of the terrorist attacks in Mombasa, Kenya in October 2002, came over the Somali border.

Empirically, however, the assertation is not as persuasive as it sounds. Afghanistan and Somalia so far remain relatively isolated examples. Instead, recent research has shown that terrorist groups seem to prefer countries with a minimum amount of security and infrastructure. Weak, but not failing, states offer them access to telecommunications, to financial, transportation and logistical infrastructure, all of which are crucial for terrorists.[8]
To sum up, the empirical connection of state failure and terrorism is less clear-cut than it is usually presented. Nevertheless, the impression that such a link exists has become very popular in international politics.

Changing Strategies of Legitimizing Intervention

So it is clear that there has been a change in global security discourse. Failed states are now being connected to terrorism, to drugs and to chaos. And what is more, whenever Western policymakers invoke the incredible human suffering that a failed state produces, it is habitually followed by a call to action, including, of course, military action. This is the most important point: state failure has become an argument in favour of military intervention. Labelling a country a 'failed state' has become an important means of creating domestic and international legitimacy for military intervention.

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[6] From the Foreword of the National Security Strategy of the United States of America, September 2002.
[7] Fischer, Joschka (2002): Opening Speech at the Third Conference of the Heads of German Missions, 27 May 2002.
[8] Cf. Schneckener, Ulrich (2004): Transnationale Terroristen als Profiteure fragiler Staatlichkeit. SWP-Studie S 18, Mai 2004. Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik.

How does this work? Let me compare the subtext of the state failure narrative with the discourse on humanitarian intervention, which was very prominent in the late 1990s. (To me, the humanitarian intervention discourse seems to have been replaced by the state failure argument.)

In cases of 'humanitarian intervention' there remained the problem that while the intentions might have been good, the intervention was against the rules. Direct violence was employed against another state. Although this was justified by claiming that fundamental human rights were more important than the principle of state sovereignty in these cases, it still was a bit of an awkward solution that was never widely accepted and remained very contentious even among supporters of the notion of humanitarian intervention.
When intervening in a failed state, however, you do not direct violence against a person or a state. Instead, violence is directed against chaos and anarchy (remember the 'black holes of lawlessness'). In this case, the violence being employed becomes a force of order and a force for good. This way of framing the issue does not evoke pictures of a military invasion. Instead, it sounds more like a police action.
I argue that the rise of the failed state in global security discourse can at least partly be explained by its usefulness as a legitimizing strategy. One case in point is British Prime Minister Blair. In several public appearances beginning in late 2001 he labelled only two countries 'failed states': Afghanistan and Iraq under the Saddam Hussein regime. Most academics would almost certainly dispute this designation, as Iraq, as repressive and tyrannical as it might have been, was certainly able to exercise authority over its territory and its people (with the exception of the Kurdish region in the North, but that was more due to the "no-fly" zone imposed there than due to an inherent weakness of the Iraqi state). This labelling of Afghanistan and Iraq as failed states clearly had the purpose of shaping public perceptions of these countries and of the military interventions that took place there.

Australian Discourse: General

In general, Australia seems to follow trends of global security discourse. This is also true in case of the 'failed state' metaphor. Nevertheless, the Australian government was very late to adopt this discourse and even then it added a few distinctive features of its own to better fit the regional situation in the South Pacific.
To reiterate, the US, Great Britain, Germany and other countries all publicly proclaimed failed states to be security threats in late 2001 and early 2002, that is, not long after September 11th. For a long time after that, Australia, in contrast, did not employ this kind of rhetoric at all. Throughout 2002, the idea that failed states represented a threat to Australia's security was only alluded to a few times. All of these times, it was presented as a humanitarian and a development question. Not once was the connection to terror made. The first time failed states were painted as a threat was in early June 2003. This coincided with the government's shift in position regarding Solomon Islands.

Solomon Islands Intervention

Until early 2003, Australia followed what Foreign Minister Downer called a "hands-off"[9] policy towards its South Pacific neighbors: Australia was glad to offer economic, humanitarian and technical assistance, but would not involve itself into any internal trouble neighbor states might have. In the first half of 2003, this policy changed markedly, culminating in the decision to accede to SI government's request of an intervention. As soon as the government began to hint at such an intervention, it presented the issue in "failed state" terms. For example, Prime Minister John Howard said: "(I)t is not in Australia's interest for a country like the Solomon Islands to fall over. It would then become potentially a haven for drug running, for money laundering, terrorism. I mean, it is in Australia's interests to have stability in the Pacific area and particularly

[9] ABC Radio National – Late Night Live, Interview with Phillip Adams, Transcript, 28 July 2004.

amongst the small island states."[10] Here, Howard evokes the familiar threats associated with failed states. One thing to note is that he did not say the Solomon Islands had actually become a failed state, but that it was close to becoming one. No senior Australian government official ever called Solomon Islands a 'failed state' outright, but dozens of times it was said to be 'on the brink of failure', 'on the verge of failure', 'close to failure', etc. The imminent failure of the Solomon Islands became a central feature of the argument supporting the Australian-led intervention.

At the same time, the government added a uniquely Australian twist to the discourse. From the beginning, the intervention was cast as a *responsibility* of Australia. Continuing the above statement, Howard went on to say: "Many of them [the Pacific island states, D.L.] find it a real struggle, because of the challenges of independence and statehood, to remain afloat and we're being a good neighbour and a good friend to respond. And, after all, the rest of the world expects Australia to shoulder a lot of the burden because this is our part of the world, this is our patch."

A similar argument was made by Foreign Minister Alexander Downer in a press conference:

> Journalist: Australia has been and continues to be involved in a range of conflicts around the world. For the ordinary voter, why is Australia getting involved in this? What's our responsibility, what's the pressure in the region of why you're taking this step?
>
> Downer: If we don't fix up Solomon Islands no one will be able to. We're the only country with the capability to do this. […] First of all, there's no doubt that in a practical sense, a failed state on Australia's doorstep provides a location where illegal activities can take place. For example, drug trafficking in particular, money laundering, people trafficking, all these sorts of activities could readily take place within the sovereign boundaries of a failed state. Secondly I do think the international community looks to Australia to ensure that the South Pacific is a stable part of the world. And so we carry some international responsibilities borne out of geography towards the South Pacific and also borne out of our history as well. And thirdly I think, if we can really get the Solomon Islands going again that will send a very strong message to other countries in the region, that there's a point where Australia just can't sit by and make the argument that these are independent countries and they're nothing to do with us. There's a point where we can't sit by. There's a point where we want to engage with these countries and get the problems fixed.[11]

To sum it up so far, the Australian discourse has the three following features:

1. A strong identification of failed states with the possibility of terrorism (similar to the global discourse),
2. Presenting Solomon Islands as having been close to state failure,
3. Painting military intervention in failed states as an obligation of Australia, both towards its South Pacific neighbors and the international community.

The argument runs as follows: In the first instance, failed states are constructed as today's Pandora's Box from which all evils of the globalized world spring forth. Then, in the second step, Solomon Islands is presented as only being one step away from such a disastrous state of affairs. The third, and thoroughly logical, step is, of course, to intervene, for the good of Australians and Solomon Islanders alike.

In this sense, the failed states discourse surrounding the Solomon Islands intervention is a legitimizing strategy, a discourse to explain and give support to the government's shift in policy. But there is deeper layer to this as well. By claiming that the intervention was a responsibility of Australia, the government is going out on a limb. International intervention is still considered against the rules of international law, unless there is a formal invitation by the country in question. In the case of Solomon Islands, there was a request by the Kemakeza government, so everything was in order here. But it's not the Solomon Islands intervention that might become a problem.

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[10] The 7.30 Report, ABC, Interview with Kerry O'Brien, Transcript, 25 June 2003.

[11] Doorstop Press Conference, Parliament House, 10 June 2003.

What worries policy elites and commentators is the idea of future Australian interventions *against the wishes* of the state in question. How would the government's rhetoric square with a situation of a failed state where the government refused permission to intervene? By the logic of the 'responsibility' argument, Australia would still have to go forth with the military intervention – otherwise, it would allow a haven for terrorists, money launderers and drug runners to develop on its doorstep. And this is precisely the point: as soon as a country in the South Pacific is successfully labelled a 'failed state', there emerges the responsibility to intervene.

Papua New Guinea provides an interesting example of the fear that such a situation creates. The PNG parliament and government had been greatly angered by reports by the Centre for Independent Studies which called it a 'failing state'.[12] This anger can partly be explained by linking this issue to the above 'responsibility to intervene' argument. Both the government of PNG and the government of Australia were quick to distance themselves from the reports' conclusions.
This little example goes to show who has the power to identify 'failed states' and that is, to a large extent, the Australian government. Just as Western nations dominate global security discourse, Australia shapes the regional security discourse. Accordingly, the Australian government has not used the label 'failed state' lightly. The only country that the government has ever claimed to be close to failure is Solomon Islands. There were few other instances where this rhetoric was employed and these were with respect to Iraq, Papua New Guinea and Nauru. At these occasions, the argument went along the lines of 'If we were to withdraw our troop commitment (in the case of Iraq) or our financial aid (in the case of PNG and Nauru), the state would collapse'. Thus, only the government's policies stood between the Australia and the chaos of failed states.

The Enhanced Cooperation Program (ECP)

Papua New Guinea is a good example that shows how the government employs the state failure and intervention discourse in political practice. In 2003/2004, Australia and PNG negotiated the ECP, which deployed several hundred Australian policemen and officials to help support state institutions and uphold law and order in PNG. In this span of time, both John Howard and Alexander Downer repeatedly were asked questions about whether the government should intervene in PNG since the Solomon Islands' intervention had been such a success. (For some reason, it was always PNG.) And both of them then either denied that PNG was even close to failing or tried to avoid a direct answer.

However, reading Howard's speeches closely, I think that over time one can discern subtle changes in pitch and tune when it came to PNG. In March 2004, when the negotiations on the ECP were getting bogged down over the question of legal immunity for Australian personnel, Howard made the closest allusion to PNG being a failed state so far: "(F)rom our nation's point of view, if Papua New Guinea falls over, and it's in a very fragile state, that will have big implications for our country. It's in the interests of Australia to help Papua New Guinea and stop it falling over, just as it's in the interests of Australia to help the Solomon Islands."[13] I might be reading too much into this, but saying PNG is in "a very fragile state" does sound only one or two steps away from invoking the 'intervention in failed states' doctrine. In any case, these two sentences closely resemble similar statements Howard (and Downer) employed when referring to Solomon Islands.

[12] Such as Windybank, Susan; Massing, Michael (2003): Papua New Guinea on the Brink. Centre for Independent Studies Issue Analysis No. 30, 12 March 2003.
[13] Opening and Closing Remarks at Mackay Community Sugar Meeting. Transcript, Mackay, Queensland, 6 March 2004.

The Responsibility to Intervene

To conclude, I'd like to get back to the earlier point about who has the power to identify 'failed states'. Whoever has the power to make such a judgment has the power to trigger 'Australia's responsibility to intervene'. It is my opinion that Australia has a strong influence over the security discourse in the South Pacific. As long as it is able to uphold this state of affairs, it is able to legitimize intervention (or the refusal to intervene) in other countries in the South Pacific. The Howard government's telling refusal to call PNG a 'failed state' shows that Australia was not, or not yet, willing to stage a full-scale intervention in its northern neighbour.

Interestingly, and this is my final point, other countries in the region have begun to take up Australia's rhetoric. Xanana Gusmao, the president of East Timor, called on Australia to accede to East Timor's demands about the re-partitioning of oil deposits beneath the ocean floor between the two countries. He concluded his plea with the dire prediction: "It makes the difference to our future. We would not like to be a failed state. Without all this [meaning the oil money] we will be another Haiti, another Liberia, another Solomon Islands, and we do not want that."[14] This is an interesting example of a small state trying to turn the tables on Australia by appropriating its discourse for its own ends. So, I think, the discussion about 'failed states' in the South Pacific is highly politically charged and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

[14] Quoted in: Marks, Kathy (2004): Australia Casts a Shadow over East Timor's Future. In: The Independent (London), 3 June 2004.

Australia's new foreign policy in the Pacific

Benjamin Craig, Australian Embassy, Berlin

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to participate in this conference on Australia's foreign policy in the Pacific.

I arrived in Berlin from Canberra in July this year. Now that I head into my first German winter, thinking about the Pacific with its hot sun and warm deep blue tropical waters has made me feel a little bit warmer.

This conference is a timely opportunity to examine developments in the Pacific and Australia's role in seeking to shape these developments.

One of my most important responsibilities in the Australian Embassy in Berlin as head of the Political Section is to try to raise the profile of Asia-Pacific issues in Germany.

Not only because Germany, the country, is an important partner of both Australia and the Pacific Island Countries, but also because Germany is enormously valuable as a key voice within the European Union, which contributes a great deal of development assistance to the South Pacific.

Today is a welcome opportunity for government representatives, academics and members of civil society to come together to consider developments in the Pacific, and how countries such as Australia and Germany can assist developing countries in the Pacific to reach their aspirations of safety, security and higher living standards.

The past 18 months has been an exciting period in Australia's engagement with the countries of the Pacific.

- Australia led the successful regional intervention in Solomon Islands;
- an Australian has, for the first time, been elected as Secretary General of the Secretariat of the Pacific Islands Forum, the region's premier political body, with a mandate for reform;
- Australia has agreed to requests from Fiji, Nauru and Solomon Islands to provide police commissioners; and
- we are also working with Nauru and Papua New Guinea to provide a significant number of Australian police and officials to help improve capacity in law and order, financial management and other areas.

Why is Australia doing this? And just as important for this conference, why do the countries of the region seek it?

The fundamental answer is that, over the past few years, the way that countries look at the world has changed. And the Pacific is no exception.
Our active policy approach has been much broader than ad hoc responses to requests for help from one or two countries.
We have been concerned at the increasingly serious security, economic and broader development challenges facing many island countries.
It is in both Australia's interests and in the interests of our Pacific Island neighbours to strive for a region that is economically viable, politically stable and free from crime.

The financial costs and potential threats to Australia and other regional countries from weakened states are immense. Such states can become havens for transnational crime and international terrorism very quickly.

Of course there is a strong feeling in the Australian community and Government that we have an obligation to assist our close neighbours in the Pacific.

In the new world security environment following the attacks on the United States of America on 11 September 2001, governments and electorates have increasingly focussed on the risks to security and economic growth from transnational threats, such as terrorism and organised crime, and from failures of governance, including corruption and deteriorating law and order, which provide cover for terrorists and other criminals.

At the same time, improvements in governance not only make life more difficult for criminals, but they empower developing countries to access the huge potential benefits of economic globalisation.

The development of strong and resilient institutions, and maintainance of prudent economic policies, are vital to achieve this.

This is often not easy to achieve quickly. Many countries of the South Pacific have limited capacity and resources, are distant from major markets and are vulnerable to natural disasters.

But the effort is worthwhile. Otherwise, hard-won economic gains can be lost quickly by the failure of institutions of governance, and the spread of violence and corruption.

On this, I am not only relaying to you Australian policy: Pacific island leaders themselves have called for improvements to governance and institutions to combat corruption.

The Pacific has already produced one stark example – Solomon Islands – of the danger from not addressing this threat as a priority.

It is important for Australia, other neighbouring countries and even over here in Europe, that the Pacific no longer endure the effects of weak institutions.

There is a long-standing shared view in our region that Australia, as the largest and wealthiest member of the Pacific Islands Forum, has an obligation to assist the countries of the region deal with problems of law and order, governance, economic management and the maintenance of basic institutions.

That obligation is particularly pressing at this time of change.

For this reason, and with the specific agreement of Pacific Island Countries, around 45 per cent of Australian aid to the Pacific region is now spent on activities that promote good governance.

Australia has been a very significant aid donor to Pacific island countries for many years. We shall provide an estimated A$819 million in aid to the Pacific in the Australian 2004-05 financial year – of which just over half will go to Papua New Guinea.

Solomon Islands

The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) is a civilian-led mission with a police and governance reform focus.

RAMSI was deployed on 24 July 2003 at the invitation of the Solomon Islands Government and under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Forum.

The Australian-led intervention was at the specific request of the Solomon Islands Government and has been a huge success.

RAMSI has been a truly regional response, with personnel drawn from Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

The mission has received overwhelming public support. Solomon Islanders, in particular, have opened their arms to RAMSI.

Solomon Islands desperately needed assistance:
- there was serious degradation of state institutions, law and order had collapsed, and the economy had contracted sharply
- the government was subjected to intimidation from criminals and conditions for most Solomon Islanders were bleak.

The results of the region's intervention in Solomon Islands are clear:
almost 4000 weapons have been seized or surrendered;
- there have been around 4,400 arrests including of many key criminals;
- People and businesses are once again paying their taxes and duties, giving the government a larger revenue source;
- health and education services are being provided and public servants are being paid on time; and
- the budget is in surplus, debt repayments have restarted and the economy is growing at around five per cent.

The regional response has been praised by members of the international community, including United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan.

At its peak, more than 2.200 personnel were deployed by Pacific Island Forum members. The numbers are now lower but still significant: 250 police, almost 100 civilians and 60 military personnel.

Australia sees ongoing stability in Solomon Islands as a long-term commitment and Australian officials continue to provide advice and take up line positions in Solomon Islands agencies.
Prior to RAMSI's arrival, many Solomon Islands departments, and even the police force, were barely operating.

Personnel lacked training, resources and guidance. While the restoration of law and order has improved conditions on the ground, it is important to help re-build capacity throughout the Solomon Islands Government in order to lay a strong foundation for the future.

Utilising Australian expertise is a constructive and effective way of laying this foundation.
Australia has drawn down Australian Defence Force numbers in Solomon Islands and will continue to do so as the security situation allows.

The Australian Federal Police (AFP), however, will remain active there for some time to come.
Among other things, rebuilding the Royal Solomon Islands Police is a key part of the AFP's role and this will be a time consuming task.

The Australian Agency for International Development, AusAID, and other civilian personnel, are likely to remain involved on an even longer-term basis, as we help Solomon Islanders to rebuild their institutions and put in place the conditions that will help create jobs and prosperity.

Before turning to other examples of Australian engagement in the Pacific I would like to address directly criticisms that some commentators make about Australia's assistance to Solomon Islands, namely that Australia is some kind of Big Brother or even bully. Or, worse, that somehow we have compromised Solomon Islands sovereignty.

We reject this as nonsense. Developing countries around the world want help to overcome their challenges and they rely on assistance by developing countries such as Australia and European countries to overcome these challenges.

In Solomon Islands, the assistance was requested and has been carried out in close coordination with the Solomon Islands Government.

To deny them this assistance would be to condemn them to a life of insecurity, fear and poverty.

In an era of globalisation, the smaller island countries are increasingly concerned about their future and they look to Australia and others for practical advice, cooperation and assistance.

And with the heightened threat of terrorism and other forms of transnational crime, Australia believes strongly that we have a duty to assist the region to meet these new challenges.

That is not to say that there is one solution for all cases.

We have tailored our responses to individual circumstances and done so in close consultation with our island partners.

The Australian Government is proud of its achievements in promoting stability and good governance in the South Pacific and has built a strong foundation for Australia's future engagement in the region.

Papua New Guinea

In Papua New Guinea, we are implementing with the Government the Enhanced Cooperation Program, an expanded and improved program of assistance to address challenges in areas such as economic management, law and order, and border management and security.

Australia will place 210 Australian police officers in-country to assist the Papua New Guinean police force and 64 officials in key economic, planning, law and justice, and security and safety agencies at very significant financial cost to the Australian Government.

As I said earlier, more than half of our aid to the Pacific goes to Papua New Guinea. More than 60 of these police officers and officials have been deployed; most of the rest will be in place by March 2005.
Australia is also strongly committed to a collaborative approach with PNG and to ensuring that our efforts are sustainable in the long run.
Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea provide excellent examples of Australia's constructive role in the South Pacific, but they are not alone.

Nauru

In Nauru, we are working with the Government to address a serious financial collapse. We are concerned by Nauru's very poor economic situation and are determined not to turn our back on that country as it faces some very tough challenges.

Australian officials are helping to implement much needed economic and management reforms.

We have been very encouraged by the reform approach of the Scotty Government in Nauru and are supporting the Government in its efforts to balance the budget and better manage an economy weakened by decades of mismanagement.

Regional – Pacific Islands Forum

At the regional level, Australia is working with fellow member countries to reform the Pacific Islands Forum so that the Forum's Secretariat in particular can better assist island countries to develop effective policy approaches in the areas of economic growth, development, good governance and security.

Australia was very pleased that fellow Forum leaders agreed to conduct a review of the Forum, including its Secretariat.

Australia was one of those countries pushing strongly for such a review and remains very much engaged in the process.

The Forum itself represents a significant achievement in regional cooperation and its evolution over three decades is something of which all members of the Forum can be proud.

However, Australia is concerned to ensure that the Forum positions itself better to assist island countries to meet increasingly complex governance and security challenges, which are prerequisites for economic growth and development.

The review process so far, particularly the work of the Eminent Persons' Group appointed by leaders, has demonstrated a great deal of commonality among Forum members on ways in which the Forum needs to change.

Australia has advocated strongly, at last year's leaders' meeting and elsewhere, the need for strengthened regional institutions and pooled governance approaches and Australia sees review of the Forum as an integral part of that.

Australia is of the view that the Secretariat needs to play a more effective role as a source of policy ideas, solutions and practical assistance to island countries, particularly the smaller states.

The Forum has not had, for example, adequate capacity to provide analysis and policy advice in economic governance and reform, institutional strengthening and security.

The Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum, Mr. Greg Urwin, is a former senior Australian diplomat who has been closely involved in Pacific issues for most of his working life.

His appointment was a mark of confidence that the Forum can rise to meet these challenges.

As Secretary-General, it is his responsibility to reshape the Secretariat to respond to priorities identified by leaders – a task he has clearly begun.
And one of the things that he is doing is to attract some of the best and brightest young Pacific professionals to work with him for a term or two at the Forum headquarters.

Australia is also actively promoting pooling of regional resources to strengthen the capacity of national governments to provide services that are sometimes too expensive to deliver on a purely national basis.

We have done this through, for example, a major study and a new technical assistance fund to support reform in the regional transport sector, particularly in aviation where a number of island economies have suffered significant economic losses.

Australia, along with other members of the Pacific Islands Forum, believes that the competitive pressures of economic globalisation make it vital that the South Pacific region continue to build on the collaborative tradition evident in existing initiatives such as the highly successful University of the South Pacific in Suva.

This is recognised explicitly in the development in the region of a Pacific Plan, commissioned by Forum leaders this year (2004) to create stronger and deeper links between the sovereign countries of the region.

It will also identify the sectors where the region can gain the most from sharing resources of governance.

I mentioned earlier the value that Australia attaches to cooperation with Germany on Pacific issues, both in its bilateral assistance and in its contribution through the EU.

One of the many features in common between Australia and Germany, aside from our close and extensive bilateral relationship that covers a very wide range of issues, is that both countries place high priority on practical cooperation with France.

The relationship between France and Australia in the Pacific has broadened and strengthened in recent years.

France is present in the Pacific through its overseas territories New Caledonia and French Polynesia, and its overseas domains Wallis and Futuna. Australia welcomes France's presence in the region.

France is an important friend to the Pacific in many areas. It shares our assessment of the need for good governance and political and economic stability in the Pacific and works with Australia to advance this goal.

France, New Zealand and Australia have trilateral joint disaster response arrangements with assets and supplies able to be deployed rapidly.

They represent an important contribution to the coordination and improvement of disaster relief operations in the Pacific and have worked effectively in a number of natural disaster situations.

Australia provides A$1.8 million annually to fund short-term training and tertiary degrees in Australia for students from New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna.

Currently 30 students from these three territories are studying at TAFEs and universities in Australia.

Further issues of Australian interest with the New Caledonian and French authorities in New Caledonia are defence co-operation including visits and joint exercises, and promoting links through sport, tourism and culture.
As with Germany, France is an important voice in the European Union in favour of the European Union's continued engagement in the Pacific.

Earlier this month, Australia convened in Sydney a meeting of donors, including the World Bank, European Union and the Asian Development Bank, to discuss and better coordinate our assistance in the area of transport reform.

Increasingly, Australia and the European Union are seeking to cooperate on development issues in the Pacific, including through better coordination of overseas aid. Recent meetings on these issues have been very positive.

Australia has also welcomed the beginning of negotiations between the European Union and the Pacific countries involved in the European Union's Africa, Caribbean and Pacific program for an Economic Partnership Agreement.

In conclusion, robust and cooperative engagement by Australia in the Pacific region is in the interests of both Australia and Pacific island countries.

As shown in the regional assistance mission to Solomon Islands and unanimous support by regional leaders for reform of the Pacific Islands Forum, Australia and the island countries of the Pacific share a common interest in a well-governed and secure region, economic growth and development and better functioning regional institutions.

Europe also stands to benefit from this. Australia looks forward to continuing our close cooperation with Europe to enable the people from Pacific island countries to enjoy freedom and prosperity, and to reach their potential.

Crowded Stage: Actors, Actions and Issues in Post-Conflict Solomon Islands

Tarcisius Tara Kabutaulaka, East-West Centre, University of Hawai'i

Introduction

Imagine a play where the stage is crowded with hundreds of actors, following different scripts, using different genres of performance, but united in the collective desire to entertain and impress. Imagine stories, plots, costumes, voices, actions, and actors interacting, pushing, colliding, and fighting to be noticed. While the intellectually artistic might find entertainment in such chaos, most of us who are not as creatively astute would find it confusing and frustrating.

I use this stage scene, not to impress you with my ability to direct plays – which, I have none – but to provide an analogy of the scene one is likely to find in a country that is recovering from a violent conflict. Countries in the post-conflict situation are often crowded with an array of actors – governments, intergovernmental organizations, multilateral organizations, non-government organizations (NGOs), churches, and more – playing a multitude of roles, following different plans (or scripts), and applying different approaches in their collective effort to help resolve conflicts and rebuild the nation. Most (if not all) have good intentions. But, in their attempts to assist, these actors often compete for (intellectual, social and physical) space, public officers' time, and limited donor funds for thousands of unconnected projects promoting a dizzying array of goals: rule of law, judicial and police reform, demobilization, peace-building, good governance, decentralization, capacity building, civil society empowerment, gender equality, youth outreach, education, economic recovery, and more.

This paper explores that crowded stage of post-conflict nation-building, and discusses how the interactions between actors influence a nation's transition from conflict to peace. To illustrate the issues and challenges that emerge from such a situation, I draw on the empirical experiences of Solomon Islands, a country that is currently in transition. I am particularly interested, here, in four questions: What roles do citizens and national governments play? How do they play that role? What are some of the factors that influence their participation? How does this affect the success of nation-building?

I suggest that on the crowded stage of post-conflict nation-building, the citizens and national government could easily be marginalized and overwhelmed, delegated to becoming audiences/spectators in the building of their country. This is particularly the case in countries like Solomon Islands where violent conflicts have further weakened already weak states. Consequently, the scripts for nation-building will invariably be written by foreign actors and will be influenced by their interests, their definitions of what constitutes nation-building, and their perceptions of what the country should look like. This could frustrate locals to the extent that they quietly withdraw their participation from the nation-building project.

Second, there is a tendency to approach nation-building by using models of development and rebuilding institutions that existed prior to the conflict and were part of the initial problems. Further, because post-conflict nation-building tends to be project-oriented, it is often short-term. Experiences from elsewhere have shown that despite political rhetoric about "long-term commitments" the participation of foreign actors usually wanes when they run out of political steam and money, the political and strategic rationale for assistance is no longer there, a new government with different policies is elected 'back home', or when the media departs for the next big crisis. Further, foreign actors tend to treat nation-building as a project rather than a process that will take decades and generations of social engineering to achieve.

Third, I propose that for post-conflict nation-building in Solomon Islands to be successful it must be directed by a body – consisting of local and international actors – who follow a common script, and are able to distant themselves from the demands of partisan politics.

Post-conflict nation-building

The term *post-conflict* is used here to refer to a period of transition rather than a state-of-being; it is that transitional period that follows the cession of conflicts. This period is often characterized by attempts to strengthen institutions, restore order, rebuild infrastructure, and establish positive social relationships between formerly conflicting parties. It refers to that period when societies formerly involved in conflict are engaged in *nation-building*, the term that Menkhaus (2003: 7) says is often used to "describe efforts to revive and rebuild governance, peace, stability, and rule of law in places running chronic deficits in those commodities". Nation-building is a process that involves a myriad of activities and has no specific timeframe: it could occur over a short period, or it could go on for many years. Because of the fluidity of the activities and approaches that the term describes, it is difficult to provide a specific definition of what encompasses that term.

In Afghanistan, for example, the term nation-building is used to refer to nearly everything, from the invasion and displacement of the Taliban to attempts to revive the economy and to establish a 'democratic' political process as manifested in the organization of a national election (Donini *et al*. 2004). In East Timor the term nation-building referred to the establishment of a government for a newly independent nation, as well as the facilitation of reconciliation between formerly conflicting parties.

The process of post-conflict nation-building often involves many parties: foreign governments, international and regional intergovernmental organizations, multilateral organizations, and NGOs. The involvement of many actors is not a new phenomenon. Societies going through post-conflict reconstruction are nearly always crowded with actors who are either eager to assist, or to benefit from the process. We saw it in Kosovo, Haiti, Sierra Leone, Somalia, East Timor, Afghanistan, Iraq, and other places where conflicts have given way to peace and rebuilding.

The reasons for participating in the rebuilding of post-conflict societies, and the approaches advocated are often as varied as the actors involved. They range from the need to safeguard political, economic, and strategic interests to the desire to cash in on the aid money poured in to rebuild infrastructure, reform institutions, counsel those affected, and capture and imprison dissidents. International organizations such as the United Nations (UN), for example, are involved because they are obligated by international conventions. This is not to rule out the fact that the involvement of international organizations like the UN is sometimes a reflection of the interests of their members, especially those who have veto power and are members of the Security Council.

Individual states, on the other hand, are, in many cases, involved in post-conflict nation-building because they want to assert their political, economic, and strategic interests. This is neither new, nor surprising. States generally act in self-interest, or at least in the interest of those in control. During the Cold War, for example, states (either individually or collectively as part of the Eastern and Western blocks) acted to deny the other access to parts of the world. Nowadays it is not unusual for the US (and increasingly Great Britain and Australia) to lead or seek UN sanction to intervene militarily in collapsed states and complex emergencies where the US has strong security and political interests (Iraq, Somalia, Haiti, Kosovo, Afghanistan). It is part of the US-led counter-terrorism strategy to promote vigorous state-building and post-conflict reconstruction in collapsed states to prevent terrorist attacks. The rationale is that leaving states like post-Taliban Afghanistan in a state of chaos would clearly be self-defeating. Hence, the US and its allies have pledged billions of dollars in post-conflict reconstruction to Afghanistan, a commitment, which attracts the usual armada of international agencies crowding the state-building playing field wherever states have collapsed and funding, is promised. By the same logic, a Kenyan-sponsored peace initiative to resolve the Somali crisis and create a government of national unity there attracted much more active support from the US, the European Union, and some international advocacy groups. The promise of substantial assistance for post-conflict reconstruction was used to entice Somali leaders to agree to the revival of a central govern-

ment, which would presumably develop a police and security capacity to control terrorist elements within its borders.

Financial institutions such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) often follow interventions and advocate for neo-liberal policies because they view growth-oriented development as an important means for attaining nationhood, and for measuring their success. Neo-liberal approach also demands that the institutional structures of the nation-state are organized in ways that resemble the Western countries where these institutions have their origin. It also means that they are absorbed into becoming part of the global market economy that is controlled by Western countries. Nations emerging from conflict often lack the resources, time, and stamina to resist the demands of financial institutions. They also need the money offered by financial institutions in order to rebuild infrastructure and maintain institutions. Hence, they would accept (however reluctant) the advices of financial institutions and adhere to their conditions.

Similarly, Australian strategic interests were pertinent in influencing Canberra's decision to be engaged militarily in Solomon Islands and East Timor. The Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, for example, told the Federal Parliament that "*If we do nothing now and the Solomon Islands becomes a failed state, . . . potential exploitation of that situation by international drug dealers, money launderers, international terrorism . . . will make the inevitable dealing with the problem in the future more costly, more difficult*" (Australian Broadcasting Corporation Asia Pacific News, June 25, 2003).

Economic interests are also an important driving force for participation in post-conflict nation-building projects. Despite all the arguments about the strategic reasons for the US-led war in Iraq, for instance, it is also evident that the US waged war on Iraq because of its leaders' interest on Iraq's rich oil fields. Larry Everest in his illuminating book, *Oil Power and Empire: Iraq and the US Global Agenda* provides a remarkable account of the links between the oil industry and the Bush government's decision to attack Iraq and oust Saddam Hussein.

Private companies in particular are involved in post-conflict nation-building because they profit financially from it. Many private companies are often sub-contracted by aid donors to do specific tasks that vary from providing security services to auditing accounts and building infrastructure. In Iraq, for example, many companies have been subcontracted to various jobs. It is not unusual for some of these companies to have connections with prominent political figures. For example, the connections between Vice-President, Dick Cheney, and Halliburton, the Texas company, which was awarded the Pentagon's contract to put out potential oil-field fires and postwar reconstructions in Iraq is well documented (Bryce and Borger 2003; Everest 2004). Academic institutions are also beneficiaries of post-conflict nation-building, receiving contracts to do research, carry out training programs, and provide consultancies.

Non-government Organizations (NGOs) of various kinds are often involved. Many are genuinely interested in assisting to rebuild post-conflict societies. But, many of them also compete for and benefit from aid funds. In many cases, NGOs are able to survive and do their jobs because they compete for and acquire funding from aid donors. They join others in competing over donor funds for what Menkhaus (2003:8) describes as "thousands of unconnected projects promoting a dizzying array of goals: rule of law, judicial and police reform, demobilization, peace-building, good governance, decentralization, capacity-building, civil society empowerment, gender and minority rights, youth outreach, education, economic recovery, and more".

The nature of the international communities' involvement in the post-conflict reconstruction (or nation-building) varies depending on the rationale for it, and the nature of the conflict on the ground. In cases where the state has completely collapsed (Somalia), or the government is forced out of power (Iraq, Afghanistan) the nation-building process often begins with military intervention, the establishment of law and order, and the formation of governments. It is not unusual to see the government resembling the intervening powers in structure, policies, and even ideologies. The assumption is that a nation cannot be successfully rebuilt unless it resembles

the intervening power; for the West, post-conflict nation-building is about winning the peace and delivering democracy.

Historically, we have had many experiences in post-conflict nation-building. Despite this there is no template for how it should be done. This is partly because in policy discussions, nation-building as an enterprise tends to be discussed in the abstract. Very few of the policy-makers and pundits pronouncing judgment on the matter have any direct field experience in post-conflict reconstruction, and even the informed public would be hard-pressed to explain how we actually "do" nation-building. It is simply assumed that the tools, expertise, and system are all in place to build capacity, good governance, and public security. This assumption is reinforced by the often inflated reporting and rhetoric of those agencies which deliver those "products" to post-conflict societies.

The reality is that the operationalization of nation-building on the ground is alarmingly weak. Strategies of post-conflict reconstruction are, to put it charitably, a work in progress. The main actors in funding and delivering post-conflict reconstruction assistance – the US Agency for International Development, the World Bank, the UN Development Program, the UK's Department for International Development, and dozens of non-profit organizations and think-tanks – have been scrambling to devise effective approaches to capacity-building and good governance projects, but little consensus exists among them. Most of the flood of recent literature on effective peace-building and post-reconstruction aid are either collections of self-evident brumbies or are "lessons learned" exercises aimed at shifting through the debris of a decade of failure. More coherent strategies may eventually emerge from these efforts, but for the moment strategy on the ground is prevalent.

Delivery of post-conflict reconstruction is even weaker than strategy. Nation-building in practice in settings like Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Somalia is little more than a cacophony of hundreds projects large and small. This "project" orientation to nation-building is a direct import from conventional development assistance, and the template is fundamentally flawed.

In many instances, what is regarded as nation-building involves, largely, the re-establishment and strengthening of structures and processes that existed prior to the conflict, and, in some cases, contributed to the initial causes of the conflict. Because of this, post-conflict nation-building is often state-centric; the state is viewed as the central pillar of the nation and must be re-established (where it has collapsed) and strengthened. This is despite the fact that in some cases it was the state that was part of the problem. In many instances, the rebuilt state resembles Western states both in structure and function. It is assumed that that it the best form of social organization.

There is often no questioning of whether or not citizens regard the state as legitimate, or whether it is possible and desirable to expect the state to function well in other societies. There is, in other words, no attempt to understand how the state functions in different societies and its role in the nation-building process.

There is, therefore, a need to critically discuss the post-conflict nation-building process in Solomon Islands.

The Solomon Islands conflict: a background

Detailed background of the Solomon Islands conflict is covered elsewhere (Bennett 2002; Kabutaulaka 2001) and need not be repeated here. It is, however, useful to provide a brief background here. Solomon Islands' current turmoil can be traced to late 1998, when men from the island of Guadalcanal—where the capital, Honiara, is located—formed the militant Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM) and harassed settlers from neighboring islands, especially Malaita. By July 1999, about 20,000 people, mostly Malaitans, had been evicted from homes on Guadalcanal.

The government of Prime Minister Bartholomew Ulufa'alu set up a task force to negotiate with the IFM and address the plight of the displaced people. The Commonwealth Secretariat sent former Fiji Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka as its special envoy, and deployed a small contingent of unarmed police officers from Fiji and Vanuatu.

Rabuka facilitated talks that led to formal accords in which the government agreed to address issues raised by the IFM and the Guadalcanal Provincial Government, and the IFM agreed to give up arms. Neither side, however, fulfilled its commitments.
Displaced Malaitans pressured the government to address their plight. Many had lost property, been harassed or raped, or had relatives murdered, and wanted help to rebuild their lives.

By the beginning of 2000 some displaced Malaitans, frustrated with the government's perceived failure to help them or to apprehend Guadalcanal militants, formed their own militant organization, the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF), located in Honiara and supported by some prominent Malaitans. The MEF, which had allies in the Royal Solomon Islands Police, began attacking villages and IFM strongholds on the outskirts of Honiara.
On June 5, 2000 the MEF, with the support of elements of the police, took over the police armory in Honiara and forced the prime minister to resign. Less than two weeks later the National Parliament met and elected Manasseh Sogavare as prime minister. In the months that followed the confrontation between the IFM and the MEF intensified, resulting in an unconfirmed number of deaths.
Despite this, negotiations continued, leading to the signing of the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) on October 15, 2000. The TPA achieved a ceasefire but failed to solve many of the problems emanating from the civil unrest or to address the underlying causes. Hence, law and order continued to be a problem, prompting requests to Australia and New Zealand for assistance.
Australian authorities offered advice and financial support but refused to deploy Australian police and military personnel. The Australian foreign affairs minister, Alexander Downer, said in January 2003, "Sending in Australian troops to occupy the Solomon Islands would be folly in the extreme" (Davis 2003).
Six months later, Downer dramatically retreated from this statement and announced Australia's plans for a military mission, saying that the Solomon Islands civil unrest had "forced" Australia to produce a new Pacific policy involving "nation rebuilding" and "cooperative intervention." He stressed that the initiative was built on the spirit of the Biketawa Declaration, signed in 2000 by members of the Pacific Islands Forum to address the need for regional cooperation on matters of security.
In June 2004, the Solomon Islands Government, knowing that they could no longer handle the increasing law and order problems requested assistance from Australia. The Australian Government then approached the Pacific Islands Forum for its blessing. Consequently, in July 2004 a Regional Assistant Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), consisting of 330 police officers (the participating force) and 1,800 regional military personnel, plus about 80 civilian personnel was deployed in Solomon Islands.

RAMSI received enormous support in Solomon Islands, especially amongst ordinary citizens who were tired of the problems of the past years. So far, the regional force has done a marvelous job, especially in restoring law and order, which was the first phase of RAMSI. They are now in the second phase – the consolidation phase – which includes strengthening the law and justice sector, stabilizing government finances and strengthening the essential machinery of government. This includes an emphasis on accountability mechanisms and reform of the public service. Phase three – sustainability and self-reliance – will begin in 2005.
Nation-building for RAMSI, therefore, is about restoring law and order, rebuilding, reforming and strengthening the institutions of government, and making sure that Solomon Islanders will be able to sustain these programs after RAMSI officials have left. Their approach, in other words, is on ensuring that the central authority (the state) exists and functions efficiently and effectively.

Actors in Solomon Islands' nation-building

Having provided the above background let me introduce some of the major actors in Solomon Islands' nation-building and the roles they played. They could be divided up into five broad categories: (i) National actors; (ii) RAMSI; (iii) Foreign governments; (iv) International organizations; and (v) Non-government organizations (NGOs). Within each category, there are numerous actors, interacting amongst themselves and with actors in other categories. Some of them have been in the Solomon Islands for a long time, being involved in attempts to rebuild the country, before RAMSI arrived. However, since the arrival of RAMSI and the improvement of security, many more have arrived. Nearly all of them are located in Honiara. And while some of them use Honiara as a base where they then reach out to other parts of the country, others concentrate on Honiara. So, you can imagine that Honiara is crowded with all these actors.

Let me make two points before I go on. First, when I talk about crowdedness here, I am referring, not only to physical crowdedness, but intellectual as well. The later refers to situations where these actors dominate intellectual discourse. Second, there is nothing wrong with the crowdedness per ser – with having lots of actors on stage. In fact, for a country in Solomon Islands situation, it would be much better to have many actors who are enthusiastic to help, than to have none. The challenge, however, is how to organize (or direct) these actors in order to ensure that their collective contributions to the nation-building process are harnessed, and will ultimately benefit Solomon Islands.

Because there are far too many actors to deal with separately in this paper, I will look at particular issues and events and we shall observe the interactions of these actors through these issues and events. I admit that this will not do justice to all the actors on stage and the complexities of their interactions. But, this is the best we could do on a paper like this. We shall engage three broad issues for the purposes of looking at how the actors interact: (i) State-building; (ii) Public Sector reform and Public Servants; (iii) Development; (iv) Intellectual spaces; and (v) Reconciliation and peace.

State-building

Many of the actors involved in Solomon Islands are engaged in one way or another with attempts to strengthen the state by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its machineries.

RAMSI's concentration, for example, has been on the law and justice sector, and in stabilizing government finances and strengthening the essential machinery of government. So, when RAMSI officials talk about nation-building, what they actually mean is state-building.

There are three major reasons for this state-centered approach. First, it is premised on actors' (especially RAMSI) assumption that if you strengthen a central institution it will then be able to impose power and authority over society, and, therefore, build a nation. The existence of an effective and efficient state that protects citizens' interests and provides services is instrumental in the establishment and sustenance of a nation. In other words, if a government is effective and efficient in protecting citizens, providing for them social and public services, and look after their interests, then people would give it legitimacy, readily accept its authority and identify with the territory that it controls.

Second, there is a conviction that it was the weakness of the state that created the Solomon Islands conflict. Hence, to prevent such an event from happening again, one needs to rebuild and strengthen the state.

The third reason for RAMSI's state-centered approach was to protect Australia's strategic interests. Canberra had stated explicitly that one of the major reasons why they are involved in the Solomon Islands is prevent terrorists from using "failing neighbor" to pose security problems for Australia.

RAMSI is not the only actor that has taken a state-centered approach. Financial institutions like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have also emphasized the need to improve the state's capacity to generate revenue and manage the economy. This has also been the emphasis of the European Union.
The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has been involved in the Constitutional reform project. This follows demands for the introduction of a federal system of government. UNDP has been instrumental in funding and facilitating consultations with citizens and the drafting of the proposed federal constitution. Apart from the Constitutional reform, UNDP has been involved in governance, more generally, even before the conflict. It was, for example, involved in the establishment of the People First Network, which (it was hoped) would cater for people's participation in governance. Apart from state institutions, the UNDP has attempted to broaden its governance project to include traditional and community leaders. It was this that led to the pilot project on Isabel.

Apart from all the foreign actors, the other actors in nation-building project are Solomon Islanders. This is a very diverse group with varying opinions on how things ought to be done. To have a glimpse of what some of them are thinking and doing, let me focus on one particular group of Solomon Islanders: the public officers.

Public Sector Reform and Public Servants

Underlying the public sector reform in Solomon Islands are two major factors. First, the machineries of the public service are not working properly and they need to be overhauled. That is why there is a need to reorganize the structures of the public sector.

Second, there is an assumption – probably a belief – that Solomon Islander public officers are generally lazy, incompetent, unprofessional, or outright corrupt. While this might not often be publicly expressed as crudely as I just did, the fact that foreign actors come into the Solomons with that in mind, immediately influences the way in which they relate to the Solomon Islands Public Service and their approaches to how it should work. It also influences the nature of foreign actors' interactions with Solomon Islander public officers. It might be true that some public officers in Solomon Islands fit that description. But, it might also be true that some public officers in other countries also fit that description. Such thinking has influenced the way in which foreign actors relate to their local civil servants.

To illustrate this, let me focus again on RAMSI. As part of the consolidating phase RAMSI Australia has provided 17 advisors and in-line personnel to assist in key areas of budget, audit, treasury, inland revenue, customs, payroll and debt management.

As a result of this, there were improvements: One year on from RAMSI's initial deployment, Government finances appear to be back under control, though much work remains to be done. Taxation revenue has increased, while the final budget balance for 2003 showed a cash surplus.[15]

But, what role do local public servants play in this, and how do they relate to it? In June 2004, while in Solomon Islands, I spoke to twenty public servants ranging from senior executive level to junior staff to gauge how they feel about the process. All of them appreciated the assistance and thought that the reforms were necessary. Sixteen, however, expressed concern about *how* it is done. They also said that they were unclear about the role of the Australian officers. Some of their concerns were:

[15] However, significant government arrears were not included in the surplus figure. For further details see: *Solomon Islands: Rebuilding an Island Economy*. Commonwealth Government, Economic Analysis Unit, Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2004.

ii) The recruitment procedures and conditions of employment. There was a feeling that if Australians were going to work in the Solomon Islands civil service, then they should be subjected to the normal Solomon Islands recruitment procedures and work under the same regulation and conditions as their local counterparts – i.e be recruited through the Public Service Commission and subjected to the General Orders.

iii) Further, there is a feeling that Australians should report to and follow the chains of command of the Solomon Islands civil service – reporting to the Permanent Secretary as the department head and being answerable to the Public Service Commission. As it is, there is a view that Australian officers communicate with and are more answerable to Canberra than Honiara. Further, there were comments about the fact that some foreign advisors have acted as though they were Permanent Secretaries. As one senior public officer stated, "Some of these officers are only advisors, but behaving as executives." Consequently, there is some feeling that there are two public services at work; one from Australia and the other from Solomon Islands.

iiii) There were also concerns about the absence of a specific time-frame for the Australian officers' engagement in Solomon Islands. The word from Canberra (and Wellington) is that they have a long-term commitment in the country. Despite this, many Solomon Islanders know that they will eventually leave. What they do not know is when and how they will leave. This creates difficulties in terms of planning and the facilitation of transition. An 'exist strategy' is also important to avoid concerns about a long-term takeover of line positions by Australians. There is a feeling among local public servants that Australians are taking up line positions as a form of employment over and above what is provided for in the RAMSI package.

ivi) RAMSI's piece-meal approach to public sector reform, and in particular, the injection of their assistance to some departments and not others could result in a situation where some departments are more resourced than others. This would create capacity imbalances that would not help with attempts to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

vi) Finally – and this might seen as a minor point by some, but nevertheless important enough to be expressed – was that RAMSI officers, in particular Australians in the public service hardly interact with locals. This results in poor working relationships and does not anchor well with the intention to transfer skills and knowledge.

I am conscious that the above expressions could be generalizations and that some of the issues expressed by Solomon Islander officers might seem "petty" to some and that there are explanations to some of these things. For instance, it could be argued that the Australian officers who left their country, their families, the luxuries of their suburban life, and the amenities that their cities provide, could not be expected to work for the same conditions as their Solomon Islander counterparts receive. They must be compensated for it. Indeed, I would be the first to argue for that. However, it would be difficult to tell a Solomon Islander public officer who is struggling to feed his family– not to mention the many *wantoks* who depend on him – send his kids to school, and meet other social commitments that he should receive less pay for doing the same or more work as his Australian counterpart. I could understand if the Solomon Islander says: "*Sapos iu tekem seleni fo hem, iu duim woka ia*" (If you get the money for it, then you do the job). On the other hand, if Australian officers begin to play the role that local public servants are supposed to play, then I would not be surprised if Solomon Islanders say, "*Sapos iu laik duim woka ia, hem oraet iu duim*" (If you want to do the job, it's ok, you do it).

Such statements are manifestations of resistance, be it quiet resistance, because of perceived (or actual) injustices in the workplace. This could affect the success of the reform program and Public Officers' contributions to the nation-building project. It would be difficult to build and sustain a nation if the professionals who are supposed to do it are not happy, are marginalized, and have, as a result, quietly divorce themselves from the project.

Apart from the above, nation-building is a busy process which demands a lot of time and effort from public officers. In particular, because of the perceived incompetence of public officers, for-

eign actors – and local ones too – often organize workshops, training programs, etc. in an attempt to improve the skills and knowledge of individual officers, and the capacity of the institutions they work for. Many of those offer such training and workshop do it so with very good intentions. However, such programs often take up a lot of public officers' time and energy. Because of the limited number of officers, they are often expected to attend meetings, administer workshops, write reports for aid projects, and the list goes on. In the end, the officers are tired, are occupied with too many things that it reduces their productive and the quality of their performance. In June 2004, for example, I was in Honiara to administer a PIDP workshop titled "*Beyond Intervention: Navigating Solomon Islands Future*." While PIDP's intentions, like that of other actors, was noble, I was soon aware what I was demanding from officers who were busy in too many other things. In fact, I counted that there were ten other workshops going on in Honiara that week we had our workshop.

One of the senior public servants that I spoke to, put it clearly:

> *What we are seeing is meetings and more meetings. The Permanent Secretaries are now going through a series of workshops supposedly organized to assist us understand our jobs better. Unfortunately, the value of these workshops are not worth the time used. . . . The topics covered are all basic. For me the workshops are more gossip sessions than anything else. These are important opportunities to help us do out job properly, but the people running them are not good enough to impart the kind of lessons that would actually help us (personal communication, source withheld).*

Development

Another issue that constitutes an important aspect of nation-building in Solomon Islands and has engaged a lot of the actors is 'development'. In fact, much of the nation-building project is premised on the idea that conflict occurred because of the absence of development. Hence, to address the problem, what Solomon Islands need to do is ensure that there is development, particularly, economic development, measured in terms of growth. Because of this thinking, the Solomon Islands Government with the assistance of aid donors put together a 'National Economic Recovery and Development Plan', which provided the blueprint for rebuilding Solomon Islands. The Key objectives of the Plan are to:

- Improve the security environment by restoring law and order and fostering peace;
- Bring about macroeconomic stability and income growth;
- Restore basic social services in health and education;
- Re-establish the foundations for sustained economic growth and human development.

In order to achieve these objectives, the plan identifies five strategic areas:

- Normalizing law and order and the security situation;
- Restoring fiscal and financial stability and reforming the public sector;
- Improving governance;
- Revitalizing the productive sector and rebuilding supporting infrastructure;
- Restoring basic social services and fostering social development.

The objectives and strategies outlined in the SIG's economic recovery plan are valid and noble. There are, however, a number of issues that we need to consider.

First, it is not entirely true to say that the presence of development will immediately lead to the reduction in the potential for conflict. In fact, one could argue that it was the tensions brought about by development – especially large-scale development projects – that underlies the causes of conflicts in Solomon Islands conflict in the first place. These include the access to natural resources like land and forest and the way in which the benefits from their exploitation were distributed. Landowners of the Guadalcanal Plains had long complained about their 2 per cent share in the Solomon Islands Plantation Limited, the company that owned the oil palm plantation in the area. This was the result of an agreement made during the colonial era (in the early 1970s). Similarly, the landowners of Central Guadalcanal own only 1.5 per cent share in

the Gold Ridge gold mining company. The fact that conflict arises from tensions created by large-scale development is not something restricted to Solomon Islands. We have also seen it in relation to the Panguna copper mine in neighboring Bougainville.

The above raises two important questions: (i) What kind of development do we want? (ii) Who should be the major stakeholders? Much of the development discussions in relation to post-conflict Solomon Islands is growth-oriented. The SIG's National Economic Recovery and Development Plan, for example, focuses on the need to create a secure environment where foreign investors could be attracted to bring in capital that will create growth. In line with this, one of the World Bank's first engagements with Solomon Islands was to review the country's Foreign Investment Act because the existing Act is said to have created an "unwelcoming environment for investors" and there is a need to create one that is "simple, transparent and efficient for foreign investment" (SIBC, 31 August, 2004).

Interesting, there is no mention either in the National Economic Recovery and Development Plan, or the plans to reform the Investment Act of how Solomon Islanders – those supposed to be the leading actors in this nation-building play – fit in to all these. Indeed, the only reference in the Plan to participation by Solomon Islands people is made in the context of good governance:
Inclusive development means that everyone participates in economic and social development and in the affairs of the community and the nation. This means that policy preference and focus is given to the marginalized and the disadvantaged and that resources are allocated to correct imbalances and restore equity. However, as the analyses in previous sections indicate there is an increasing level of social exclusion of individuals and household in terms of income, employment, education and health, and with gender and in spatial areas. The development process is leaving behind an increasing number of people households and communities instead of carrying them forward and improving their lives (SIG 2003:62).

Implicit in the discussions of development is the idea that Solomon Islanders should only be beneficiaries of state-generated development, and that their participation should be restricted to the alienation of two of their most important means of production – land and labor – to foreign investors. There is no discussion of how the landowners themselves could be owners or major shareholders of investments. This is a point that Transform Aqorau emphasizes in his piece on "people's approach to economic development." His basic argument is based on the premise "that landowner's rights to their resources should be an instrument to improve their quality of life. The use of these rights can be exercised cooperatively, either in partnership with each other or with foreign investors" (Aqoarau 2004:119).

Intellectual Space

Another issue that I want to raise with regards to nation-building in Solomon Islands is that of the occupation of spaces – both physical and intellectual spaces. The arrival of RAMSI, to the happiness of most Solomon Islanders, meant that they had taken social control away from the former militants and are trying to bestow it back on the Solomon Islands government, but have also controlled physical space. Their presence in places like the Weather Coast of Guadalcanal was welcomed by most people there. They have, for example, set up a police station at Isuna on south Guadalcanal, an area that was once the base of the notorious Harold Keke and his Guadalcanal Liberation Front (GLF). They also have police posts in other parts of Guadalcanal and Malaita. Honiara, where criminals like Jimmy 'Rasta' Lusibaea, James Kili etc. once ruled has been cleared of their presence. Many of these characters, who once ruled have since been physically relocated to the Rove Prison in Honiara. Most Solomon Islanders are appreciative of RAMSI's occupation of these physical spaces.

But, foreign actors like RAMSI also occupy intellectual spaces by setting agendas; while they might not influence people's opinion about issues, they certainly influence the issues that people think about. In the month that I was in Solomon Islands, there wasn't a single day that went past that RAMSI was not mentioned in the radio and print media. RAMSI has an efficient media machinery where its "spin doctors" are effective in influencing what Solomon Islanders breath

and live on intellectually. Of course, this is viewed as part of being transparent, and the need to inform the public of RAMSI's work. But, it could also have another effect. It could crowd out Solomon Islanders' thinking about what they could do and their role in the nation-building process. I observe with interest, for example, the fact that discussions for the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission by SICA evaporated after RAMSI's arrival. Perhaps it was an indication of the assumption that RAMSI had solved the country's problems and there was no need for such a Commission.

RAMSI is not the only actor occupying intellectual space. There are others, including academics: Those of us who are preoccupied with explaining what happened and making recommendations on what should be done about it. We make up a mixed group of actors as well: Some have had long relationships with the country while others see what happened as an opportunity to build a career. Some of us have, therefore, become Solomon Islands experts overnight. Our works might not be accessible to general public, but they make their way into universities where younger Solomon Islanders are academically engaged.

Reconciliation and Peace

The reconciliation and peace agenda has been left largely in the hands of the National Peace Council (NPC). This is because of the conviction that foreign actors cannot create peace for Solomon Islanders. It will have to be done by Solomon Islanders themselves.

Consequently, the NPC has involved traditional and community leaders as the main actors in that scene. NPC's focus has been at the community level. But, NPC's existence is uncertain and there are suggestions that it should be abolished. It would be problematic to see that only institution that works on building the nation at the people level – in the communities – has an uncertain future.

I have, so far, identified some of the actors that are on Solomon Islands' nation-building stage. There are many more – far too many for me comment on all of them. But, let me identify some of them. The UN, through the UNDP in particular, has been involved in Solomon Islands long before RAMSI came on stage. Some of the major engagements included: (i) Constitutional review; (ii) the establishment of the People First Network; (ii) The disarmament and rehabilitation of Special Constables. The European Union plays an important role in the education sector, especially at the tertiary level. They are, for example, involved in the current attempts to reform the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education. They are also involved in technical and vocational training education. Financial institutions such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, International Monetary Fund have played important roles on this stage as well.

There are also numerous NGOs doing different projects in Solomon Islands: Oxfam Australia, Foundation of the People of the South Pacific (FSP) International, Red Cross, etc.

The local actors are also interesting and diverse bunch as well, and made up of NGOs, churches, Unions, politicians, Central Government, Provincial Government, quasi government organizations such as the National Peace Council, etc. that also have different opinions and views of how things should run. The interaction amongst them is complicated, let alone amongst others.

Directing the nation-building play

From the above it is obvious that there are many actors wanting to contribute to the post-conflict nation-building process in Solomon Islands. Many of them do their own things and their interactions are often uncoordinated.

Because of this, I think there is a need to create a Director's position for the Solomon Islands nation-building play. The director would be responsible for making sure that all the actors follow

the same script, and there is order on stage, and making sure that the play provides entertainment, rather than chaos.

I suggest that we have a group of people directing, rather than one individual. That group should be made up of representatives from different sectors of society: the Government, Opposition, RAMSI, Churches, Women, Foreign Governments, Provincial Representatives, etc. That body would be responsible for coordinating the work of the actors in the nation-building process, and making sure that competing and overlapping interests are limited.

I agree that there is some validity in the argument that the national government is the most appropriate institution to write the script and direct the 'nation-building play'. However, in post-conflict situations the government's position is often undermined by its inherent weakness and the political baggage that it carries from its members' (alleged and actual) involvement in matters relating to the conflict. Further, governments are made up of politicians who will (because of the nature of their profession) be inclined to use the nation–building project to prop up their position.

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The New Australian Foreign Policy: Striving for Hegemony or Stabilization of Weak States

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Introduction

Australia's foreign policy towards the Pacific region is dominated by self-interest. But that should come as no surprise – and it is not a criticism. It is perfectly natural that Australia's foreign policy reflects its perceived interests in places beyond its borders and in international relations.

This may be obvious in the area of trade and investment, and also in relation to security. But it is probably less obvious in the area of aid. Australia's aid policy in the Pacific region may well be partly motivated by altruism – by generosity of spirit – but it is also motivated by a desire to foster in the Pacific those values that Australians themselves hold.

In addition, there is significant overlap between the areas of aid and security, and aid and trade and investment. For example, Australia wants to see stability in the Pacific island States. This is not only for the benefit of Pacific islanders. It also has an obvious importance for regional security, and for import and investment markets in the region. So Australian exporters and investors will benefit from greater stability in the Pacific too.

The important point here for Pacific people and our leaders is that Australian foreign policy reflects Australia's interests, and not our own. Our national interests will be consistent with Australia's interests in some areas, but they will be inconsistent with them in others.

That recognition is my starting point.

Security Policy and Terrorism

In the area of security, Australia's policy towards the Pacific reflects its strong interest in ensuring that Australian nationals who live in or visit the island States are safe, and more broadly that the island States do not provide an entry point or staging ground for international terrorism or other trans-national crime in the region. This concern was heightened by the Bali bombing in 2002, which was an attack carried out by Islamic extremists who deliberately targeted Australian and other tourists, and killed more Australians than any other overseas event to date, outside of wartime.

The US "War on Terror", in which Australia is playing an active role, has significant implications for the Pacific region – as it does everywhere. In my view, Australia's interests in this area are largely consistent with the interests of Pacific people. We all want to be free from politically-motivated violence, and if Australia puts more money into the Pacific to improve the security of our harbours and airports, to facilitate the drafting of new anti-terrorism laws and to support the training of police in investigating terrorism, then that is likely to be to our mutual benefit.

However, it is important to recognise that the instability and politically-motivated violence that has affected some Pacific island States in recent years has nothing to do with Islamic extremism. It may be appropriate to label some of the perpetrators as "terrorists", but it is far more important to recognise that almost all of the groups involved are indigenous groups, and their actions are largely an expression of discontent or fear concerning resource issues affecting them. Land rights is one obvious resource issue causing discontent and fear among some indigenous groups in the Pacific, for example. Lack of indigenous participation in business is another.

The point here is that using the term "terrorism" to describe violence committed or threats made in the context of internal conflicts in the Pacific may be accurate in theory, but it has very little

explanatory value. It contributes little or nothing to our understanding of these conflicts or to our attempts to resolve them.

This was brought home to me at a public workshop on the topic of terrorism that my organisation, the Citizens' Constitutional Forum, co-hosted in Suva earlier this year with the Fiji Human Rights Commission. There was a lively discussion at the workshop as to whether the leaders of indigenous uprisings from Pacific history could or should be labelled as "terrorists". Underlying this discussion, I think, was a concern as to whether indigenous extremists in the Pacific could be a target, or at least a potential target, in the War on Terror.

The rhetoric of some of Australia's leaders suggests that they do lump indigenous extremists in the Pacific together with Islamic extremists, as the target of the War on Terror. However, I am pleased to say that the actions of Australian officials on the ground – such as in the Regional Assistance Mission in the Solomon Islands, and the aid program to Papua New Guinea – generally display a deeper understanding of the issues involved.

Having said that, I believe it is too early to tell whether Australia's mission in the Solomon Islands has been successful – and the same is very much true of its work with the police in PNG. In the Solomons, for example, while the civil war has ended for the time being, the causes of the conflict have not been removed. Unless that occurs, there is a danger that fighting will break out again once the Australian-led security force withdraws. This is why I say that the rhetoric of the War on Terror is not helpful in the Pacific. It offers nothing in the way of an explanation for the conflict in the Solomons. But that conflict must be explained, and its causes removed, if the relative peace, which has been achieved there is to be strengthened and made permanent.

Another point that I would like to make in the context of security policy relates to the comments made some time ago by the Australian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister regarding their willingness to make pre-emptive military strikes on foreign soil to protect Australian citizens against terrorism. These comments of course echoed statements made by US President, George W. Bush. Speaking as a citizen of a country that might easily be the target of one of these pre-emptive strikes, I can only say that I am highly sceptical of this so-called "doctrine". For one thing, it is not new. Public expressions of willingness to make pre-emptive strikes may be new, but the concept is as old as war itself. Hitler used it to justify starting World War II, for example. So, in making these comments, the Australian Government is placing itself in the worst possible company.

It may be possible to imagine a situation where a pre-emptive strike on foreign soil could be justified – but it would have to be an extreme and exceptional case. Iraq was said to be such a case, but of course we now know the claim that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction was false. It just goes to show how dangerous the pre-emptive strike doctrine is.

So in my view the Australian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister should not have made the comments that they did. They did not contribute to regional security, and were really just the statements of a bully – which achieved nothing other than to confirm Australia's loyalty to the US. The pre-emptive strike doctrine is an aggressive, unilateralist one, and while I have said that the interests of Australia and the Pacific States are largely consistent in the War on Terror, rhetoric like this has no power to bring people together – it can only divide us.

Trade and Investment Policy

Turning to the area of trade and investment policy, the first point to be made is that the Pacific island States import enormous quantities of Australian goods and attract a lot of Australian investment. In 2002, for example, the total value of Australian exports to the region, excluding New Zealand, was $2.5 billion Australian. The total value of Australian investments in the region was an estimated $2.3 billion.

Although Australia also provides a significant export market for the Pacific island States, we do not, of course, export or invest anywhere near the same amount in Australia. Instead, we have a dependency on Australian exports and investment, while it enjoys a steady stream of returns.

It is important to acknowledge that the island States have for many years enjoyed preferential access to markets in Australia and New Zealand for certain products. This has been provided by the South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement, or "SPARTECA", which was concluded in 1981. SPARTECA was critical, for example, to the birth of the textile and garment industry in Fiji and the survival of small export sectors in most of the islands.

However, preferential trade arrangements have since fallen increasingly out of fashion, and the value of SPARTECA for the Pacific islands has decreased as Australia and New Zealand have pursued trade liberalisation. One notable exception to this in the case of Australia is the retention of tariffs on textiles, clothing and footwear. Preferential access to the Australian market for these products has helped to keep the garment industry in Fiji alive up to the present time. This arrangement was due to expire at the end of this year. However, this would have led to some thousands of job losses, especially among Indo-Fijian women, who dominate the industry. Fortunately, following representations from Fiji, Australia has now agreed to extend the Textiles, Clothing and Footwear Scheme under SPARTECA for another seven years.

SPARTECA is ultimately set to be replaced by the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations, or "PACER", which was negotiated between the member States of the Pacific Islands Forum in 1999 and 2001, and came into effect in 2002. PACER essentially requires the Pacific island States to enter into negotiations with Australia and New Zealand on trade liberalisation and economic integration within eight years time at the latest.

PACER does not provide preferential market access for Pacific exporters to Australia or New Zealand. Rather, it is assumed that trade liberalisation and economic integration will deliver benefits to all parties, because neo-classical economic theory says that this is so. However, a non-government organisation in Fiji called the Pacific Action Network on Globalisation commissioned a study of PACER by an expert on international economic regulation, Professor Jane Kelsey from the University of Auckland – and that study, which was completed in August of this year, suggests that PACER presents significant costs for the Pacific island States, and few, if any, benefits. One difficulty is that the island States are not able to bring to the trade negotiations anywhere near the same expertise that Australia and New Zealand can, so they are in danger of being out-manoeuvred. Another difficulty is that many of the island States are highly dependent on Australian and New Zealand aid, which again may make them vulnerable to manipulation in negotiations.

According to Professor Kelsey's study, Australian and New Zealand negotiators are not above bullying and other dirty tricks if it helps them to get their way.

So trade policy is one area in which Australia's interests and those of the Pacific island States diverge, in my view. I should emphasise, of course, that this does not necessarily reflect the official position of the Fiji Government, or of any other Government in the region. For my part, I believe that the Pacific island States need to devote more time and resources to assessing the social impact of international economic commitments they have already made, before they rush into any more.

We have seen this, I believe, in the context of the negotiations for PACER itself, where at least two economic studies were done, but no meaningful social impact assessment was ever carried out. The economic studies projected that the agreement would have social impacts, and relied upon neo-classical economic theory in reaching the conclusion that these impacts would ultimately be positive.

Aid Policy

In the area of Australia's aid policy, I am not an unbiased observer and so cannot claim to give an impartial assessment. The Citizens' Constitutional Forum receives significant funding from the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) for our rural education program, and for this we are very grateful.

Aid is a very complex area, and perhaps all I should say is that I hope Australia will continue to provide aid to governments and non-government organisations in the Pacific States, that this aid will continue to be directed to meeting needs which have been identified locally, and that there will continue to be a focus on capacity building – including strengthening local institutions and improving the skills of local people – with the ultimate aim of removing the need for more aid in the first place.

However, there is one other comment that I would like to make, and that concerns the overlap between the areas of aid and security policy. There have been suggestions recently that Australian aid to the Pacific States may be increasingly tied to its security interests in the region. As I said earlier, in my view, Australia's interests in the area of security are largely consistent with the interests of people in the Pacific.

However, I also think it is important to recognise that helping to train our police in investigating terrorism, and providing funds to improve security in harbours and airports, for example, are not simply a matter of aid. Or, if you can call them aid, then they are examples of aid that is directed towards priorities which have been set by Australia and not by the Pacific States themselves. These initiatives have nothing to do with altruism.

Regional Co-operation and Integration

Before closing, I would also like to say something about the issues of regional co-operation and integration in the Pacific. This has always been something of a contentious area, at least since the Pacific States became independent. The Pacific States often feel that they have a precarious hold on their sovereignty – on control of their own affairs – and new proposals for regional co-operation or integration are often seen as a further threat to that.

So, for example, the rumours last year of a proposal that Pacific States should adopt the Australian dollar as a common currency were viewed with suspicion by many in the region. Given the economic reliance of the Pacific States on Australia – and, to a lesser extent, New Zealand – such suspicions are, in my view, inevitable. While Australia and the Pacific States enjoy mutual benefits from trade and investments, Australia is the State with most of the power in the relationship.

For this reason, any proposals for economic integration, which emanate from Australia are likely to be seen as attempts to extend its economic power in the region.

However, my own view is that proposals for regional co-operation need to be examined on their merits, and that there is scope for greater co-operation than occurs at present. Questions of integration, which some see as the next step up from co-operation, are even more challenging, and these will need to be addressed gradually, if at all. This, I believe, is the approach being adopted by the Pacific Islands Forum at the present time.

One proposal for regional co-operation in which the Citizens' Constitutional Forum has an interest is the idea of a regional human rights institution. At present, Fiji is the only Pacific State which has a Human Rights Commission, and this proposal, which I understand emerged from a conference held in Suva earlier this year, could enable human rights services to be delivered throughout the region, without the need for each State to establish a separate body. I suspect it is early days yet, but I look forward to seeing how the proposal progresses.

In general, it may be that proposals for regional co-operation or integration will enjoy greater prospects of success if they include only the Pacific island States themselves, and not Australia or New Zealand. This is because the island States have more in common culturally, they are at similar stages of development, and their economies are relatively similar in size and strength. Excluding Australia and New Zealand could therefore reduce fears of a loss of control or sovereignty.

Of course, this is unlikely to be what Australia and New Zealand have in mind – at least in the area of economic integration. We have already seen this with the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations. Part of the impetus for PACER appears to have been the desire of Australia and New Zealand not to be left out when the Pacific island States began negotiating for a free trade agreement among themselves. As I said earlier, the benefits of PACER for the island States are, in my view, doubtful.

Conclusion

Turning to the theme of this discussion, "The New Australian Foreign Policy: Striving for Hegemony or Stabilization of Weak States", I would say that, in the area of security policy, Australia's involvement and intervention in the Pacific is generally welcomed. No one seriously believes they are striving for hegemony in this regard. However, in the area of trade and investment, Australia's interests are not consistent with those of the island States, and in my view there are worrying signs that Australia is prepared to pursue its interests even if it is to the detriment of development in the Pacific region.

There may even be a case for saying that the Australians see the Pacific as their backyard – or as their "patch", as the Australian Prime Minister said recently – and that they are seeking to maintain or extend a kind of economic hegemony over it. To the extent that that is true, it may conflict with their security interests and with the objectives of their aid policy – and even with their overall economic interests in the long term. This is because a more prosperous Pacific is more likely to be peaceful, it is less likely to be reliant upon foreign aid, and it will provide larger and more profitable export and investment markets.

Weak states and the new Australian interventionism in the South Pacific: Consequences and challenges

Roland Seib, German Pacific Network

The intervention in the Solomon Islands in July 2003 marked a "specific and significant" (foreign minister Alexander Downer) shift in Australia´s foreign policy in the Pacific region. While traditional relations towards the region´s nations has been based on strict respect for sovereignty and a policy of non-interference since independence several decades ago to avoid criticism of neo-colonialism, the new approach of the conservative government towards "our patch" (prime minister John Howard) has been declaredly pro-active and based on co-operative interventionism ("get more directly involved", again Howard). Canberra claims the new strategy´s broad support of the 15 Pacific Island Forum member states. The Forum is used as the legitimizing institutional umbrella.

The new doctrine is highly influenced by the attacks on 11 September 2001, the Bali bombing attack in October 2002 and the policy of the US government of fighting international terrorism through a world-wide "coalition of the willing", leading to military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Australian government consequently adopted the view that terrorism is the main threat to international security and stability. It also followed the US policy of linking terrorism and the phenomenon of state failure, assuming this to allow an infiltration of terrorism and transnational crime (such as the drug and gun trade, prostitution, money laundering and visa scams). US President George W. Bush has applauded the more activist role of the Australian government in the Pacific and the focus on preventing so-called failed states and security problems.

Canberra´s shift in foreign and security policies has been accompanied by an massive increase in defence spending and an expansion of Australian police presence and co-operation in the region. Features include:

- the most expensive military build-up in Australia´s 103 year history. The Howard government intends to spend 50 billion A$ (equivalent to 31 billion Euro) over the next decade until 2014 (Falksohn 2004). Its military forces are to be able to act autonomously with maximum range,
- the establishment of a 500-strong regional deployment force within the Australian Federal Police to respond quickly to political unrest overseas,
- the insistence on Australia´s right to make pre-emptive strikes in the territories of its neighbours, a claim immediately repeated after Howard´s election victory,
- the engagement of Australian personnel (especially of the police, military and justice sectors) in Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Fiji, Nauru, East Timor, Indonesia and the Philippines and
- the opening of a regional Police Academy in Fiji for the special training of law enforcers to counter terrorism and other security challenges.

Current foreign policy marks a significant turn away from the past United Nations focused multilateral approach, denouncing such organizations as ineffective and unfocused with results at the lowest common denominator. For foreign minister Alexander Downer the outcomes of the Iraq involvement are more relevant "than blind faith in the principles of non-intervention, sovereignty and multilateralism." (Radio Australia 27.6.2003) The UN will be informed, but will have no influence or role in running Australian-led interventions.

Observers such as Tomar (2004) have identified a clear shift in Australian aid policy from the issue of poverty reduction through sustainable development to broad objectives of regional security and good governance. Noteworthy is also the new approach of close co-operation among organizations and departments engaged in the region, resulting in the development agency AusAID, intelligence services, military and police institutions and even academia all working hand in hand.

Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI)

The intervention of an Australian-led 2225-strong police force backed by military in the Solomon Islands seems to be justified. The breakdown of governance and the rule of law, the large-scale abuse of power, responsibility and resources, a chaotic administration and the unhindered actions of militias and criminal gangs supported by police members present the first case of state failure in the region. Serious human rights violations such as murder, torture and rape, described recently by an Amnesty International report, explain the broad acceptance by Solomon islanders for the intervention. In the five years until 2003, the violence had killed several hundred people.

While the first step of the mission of disarming and arresting militias and criminals was successful, the broad agenda for the intervention appears highly unrealistic. The objectives of `state-building´ (help to re-establish an effective and responsible government), `nation-building´ (help with the development of a more harmonious, stable social and political order) and general overall stability (cf. Hegarty et al. 2004) are far too ambitious, a program for decades based on permanent foreign presence and direction, paternalism, and personal and financial dependency (see also Tabutaulaka 2004). Even now under RAMSI control, non-governmental organizations such as the Solomon Islands Christian Association criticize that elected leaders not only continue to be largely irrelevant to addressing the problems of the country, they are often identified as the source of the problems. The Solomons have become a safer place to live, but the existing conflicts (migration, land issues, federalism, development) are not solved. Social cohesion remains weak.

Enhanced Cooperation Program (ECP) on Papua New Guinea

The situation in Papua New Guinea is not comparable to the Solomon Islands, even if many of the leaders there are also compromised by their lack of personal integrity and state institutions are discredited by their inability to function. While political instability, mismanagement, corruption and lawlessness continue, there are nevertheless some successful efforts for improvement since the change of government in 1999. The ECP delegation of up to 70 public servants could bring some medium-term stability and continuity to governance institutions, especially in relation to financial affairs, the judiciary and the fight against corruption.

The presence of 230 Australian police officers, the second component of the program initiated by Canberra, will have a far smaller impact on the deteriorating law and order situation. They are based in the capital Port Moresby and some Highlands regions. Because the majority of mainly rural regions will be ignored, the assertion of a new start for the country is questionable. The engagement of the police officers also seems to be on thin ice. The first citizens killed by Australians hands could trigger the perception of a foreign occupation, something experienced before with the World Bank´s structural adjustment policy (the impression of a `big brother´ approach has always been latent, not only in bilateral relations). It would complicate or even discredit humanitarian aid and development co-operation, which continues to be essential for many local projects and initiatives as well as for health, education and infrastructure maintenance.

Conclusion

Institution-building, and the strengthening of governance in general, will continue to be the major challenge for most Melanesian countries. The restoration of order and essential services is the only way to increase trust and legitimacy among these states. It is also common sense that more attention and resources should be directed to local and regional initiatives. Moreover, participation and empowerment of civil society need to be seen as a necessary corrective of state-centred development models pursued since independence. Pacific people must develop their own path. However, poor leadership and traditional loyalties, as well as a political environment of instability, unpredictability and corruption continue to be the biggest impediments.

The major security threats in the South Pacific remain internal. An approach of bilateral co-operation, based primarily on considerations of security and other interests and directed towards intervention (and implicit force), lacks respect and sensitivity for other countries and their cultures, discredits humanitarian and development aid, offers no long-term solutions and aggravates conflicts, as best demonstrated in the Broader Middle East. It is always a thin line between assistance to address challenges, and imposition of own goals. Australia´s ambitions to act as a middle power or as an “interpreter of big power influence in the region” (former New Zealand prime minister David Lange, taking a critical stance, in the PNG Post-Courier 8.9.2003) must be observed with scepticism. They match Canberra´s rigorous transformation of the formerly robust social democracy into a free economy favouring liberalism, deregulation and privatization, a program just recently endorsed by the majority of Australian voters.

Summary and Conclusion

Volker Böge, German Pacific Network

Of course, it is difficult to summarize one and a half days of intense debate. Hence, I can only present a rather personal view and assessment. I'd like to make eight points:

1. **Paradigm shift**: The reason for a seminar on Australian foreign policy towards the Pacific was, that we observed a re-orientation of that policy: From a hands-off to a hands-on approach. RAMSI is the most visible sign of that paradigm shift. The ECP in Papua New Guinea is another indication: ECP places considerable numbers of Australian police officers and other officials in line with positions of the PNG state apparatus for longer periods. The guiding questions of the seminar were: What are the causes and reasons for that paradigm shift? What are the reactions and assessments of the people affected? In principle, the renewed Australian interest in the Pacific was regarded as a positive development. However, the concrete forms of the Australian engagement gave reason for concern and debate.

2. **Co-operative intervention:** Australia's Foreign Minister Alexander Downer coined the term "co-operative intervention" with regard to RAMSI. RAMSI is presented as a multilateral endeavour, as a policing operation with a military component, as an intervention upon the request of the Solomon Islands government. Hence it is presented as being completely different from old-fashioned imperialist or colonialist types of intervention. However, several open questions remain:

3. **Law and order concerns:** RAMSI's direct short-term goal was the restoration of law and order (in Honiara and rural areas of Guadalcanal, to be precise). In this respect RAMSI was a success: Weapons were collected, warlords put into prison, militant groups dispersed, basic services restored, the police reconstructed. There is no open large-scale violence any longer – but there is no peace either. The costs of the restoration of law and order must not be underestimated: RAMSI gave legitimacy to a government that came into power under questionable circumstances and that is inherently corrupt. The vast majority of the Solomon Island people are disappointed with regard to RAMSI's failure to move against the 'big fish' in government. The integrity of the present government is strongly contested by the Solomon Island public, but the Australians cooperate with that illegitimate government.

4. **State-building:** There is the general impression in the Solomon Islands that RAMSI 'is happening' to the country. There is no ownership of the process. To the contrary: there is an over-dependence on RAMSI. RAMSI is perceived as the 'real' government by many. This casts considerable doubts on the sustainability of the project. This is all the more embarrassing as the proclaimed long-term goals of the intervention are to re-build the state and to re-build the nation of the Solomon Islands. There is a massive focus on state-building. This state-centric approach has to be seen in the context of the discourse on failed and failing states. This notion is very questionable with regard to states in the Pacific: States cannot 'fall apart' as they have never been built up. There is no (or hardly any) 'state' presence in vast areas of the entities called 'PNG' or "Solomon Islands' or 'Vanuatu'. Hence it is a flawed approach to think in terms of re-building the state. This holds even more true to re-building the nation. There are no 'nations' in the western sense. State-building and nation-building are outside models that do not fit with the realities on the ground of Pacific societies. RAMSI, ECP etc. pursue a far too state-centric approach.

5. **Beyond the state:** It is a narrow western perception to think that no state order equals to: no order at all. Beyond the state there are a lot of things happening, there is a host of actors and institutions. There are pre-modern, pre-state customary ways and means, traditional mechanisms of maintaining order and peace, controlling violence and man-

aging conflict. The talk about weak and failing states only means that there are other societal entities that are relatively strong. Those customary mechanisms and traditional authorities that are still in place in Pacific societies have to be included in peace building efforts. This means to pursue a different approach to state building, an approach that does not impose the western state model on indigenous societies. Only then the root causes of violent conflict can be addressed and sustainable peace established.

6. **The 'war against terror' lens:** Australia perceives the Pacific very much through the 'war against terror' lens. In fact, the new Australian policy towards the Pacific can only be understood in the context of the changed strategic environment after 9/11. Basically the official Australian argument runs like this: Failed states pose a security problem to their neighbours. They can become safe havens for terrorists, organized crime, drug trafficking, money laundering etc. In this respect the Australian official discourse is very much in line with the US government's policy: Failing states are linked to terrorism; terrorists find refuge in stateless areas; where there is no state there is chaos, where there is chaos terrorists hide – and therefore there is an obligation to intervene (militarily). The imminent failure of the Solomon Island state was used as the argument for the Australian-led intervention. That intervention was presented as a responsibility of Australia: If we do not do it, nobody else will do it. The intervention in Solomon Islands thus has to be seen in the context of the 'war against terror'. The US-Bush government and the Australia-Howard government obviously have agreed upon a division of global responsibilities. The Australians take responsibility for "our patch" (Howard), that is the Pacific. Domestic concerns might have played a role, too: shift from a rather unpopular distant involvement in Iraq to the neighborhood where the obligation to intervene could more easily be explained to the Australian public. Commitments in the Solomon Islands, on the other hand, can be used as an excuse in debates with the US and the UK (the argument would be: We cannot do more in Iraq as we are already engaged in Solomon Islands). To summarize: The 'failed states' discourse is used as a legitimizing strategy. The question arises: Who has the authority to identify 'failed states'?

7. **The gap between Australian policy motives and Pacific islanders' concerns:** Obviously the centrality of security concerns in the Australian policy towards the Pacific leads to the current more pro-active, hands-on Australian stance. Australia's approach is driven by its own threat perceptions and its own national interests. Of course, nobody can blame Australia for that. And as in the case of the Solomon Islands Australian interests and the interests of the people on the ground in the Pacific may overlap or fit together. However, the fact remains that there is a gap between the threat perception, the security interests and the ensuing policy motives of the Australian side on the one hand and the real problems, the root causes of conflicts in Pacific island societies on the other hand. The external security agenda and local realities do not fit together. And one might doubt whether the Australian policy really will assist in addressing those problems and root causes (e.g. land issues, gendered violence, the problem of large numbers of unemployed disgruntled young men). Only a policy that helps to address these problems will lead to sustainable peace.

8. **Lessons learned:** Some lessons one can learn from achievements and shortcomings of the Australian policy are:
    - long-term commitment;
    - involvement of non-state actors;
    - Avoidance of state-centric approaches;
    - Reassessment of western concepts of state- and nation-building;
    - Emphasis on ownership of processes;
    - Wisdom in selection of counterparts (no corrupt leaders);
    - Cultural sensitivity.

It is of utmost importance to understand the particular histories and social complexities of the Pacific societies. One has to be sensitive, and – above all – one has to show respect for local indigenous knowledge regarding conflict resolution and peace building.

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