

## Chapter 6

### Finding Common Ground:

### New Zealand and Regional Security Cooperation in the Pacific

*Anna Powles*

#### **Executive Summary**

- The Pacific is growing in geostrategic relevance, and this has implications for New Zealand's engagement and influence in the regional security architecture.
- Regional security architecture in the Pacific Islands is becoming increasingly tested, contested and challenged as a consequence of sub-regional dynamics and the heightened engagement of new and non-traditional partners.
- Geopolitical dynamics are also re-shaping regional security in the Pacific as periphery powers China, India and Russia challenge the influence of the traditionally dominant smaller powers, Australia and New Zealand.
- Larger peripheral powers, China, India and Russia, have stepped up engagement with the Pacific Islands; and France, having previously shown little interest in the actual region in which her Pacific *outré-mer*, or overseas territories, are situated, is becoming increasingly concerned about being left out of the regional security architecture.

## **Introduction**

The geopolitics of the Pacific is entering a fascinating phase. The winds of political change are gathering strength within the region — in part, spear-headed by Fiji's fiercely independent foreign policy — and will ultimately transform regional security and governance. The region, historically the site of external geopolitical competition, is increasingly experiencing the pressures and tensions of the larger powers on its periphery.

With New Zealand's election to a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (2015 - 2016), there is an opportunity for New Zealand perspectives on the regional security architecture in the Pacific Islands to gain a wider currency and influence. This will, however, require New Zealand to demonstrate stronger leadership in the region.

The nature of threats facing the Pacific Islands region, including climate change, fragile cities, resource and environmental security, demographic pressures, the potential emergence of two new states in the next decade, and worsening health security, demand innovative and creative solutions. The regional security architecture will be challenged by two independence referendums scheduled to be held in Bougainville and New Caledonia before 2020. Regional security groupings will need to reorient themselves to face these challenges, and that will mean engaging new and non-traditional actors seeking greater influence in the region. As a consequence, New Zealand can no longer assume its influence in the region.

It is argued here that New Zealand's influence in the Pacific has already waned significantly, although Wellington has been reluctant, indeed resistant, to acknowledge the fact. This chapter first examines New Zealand's strategic environment and approaches to the Pacific, and its engagement with and contribution to regional security cooperation mechanisms. The chapter then asks what effective and resilient regional security cooperation mechanisms look like; and critiques opportunities for New Zealand to further enhance regional security cooperation. The chapter then concludes

that New Zealand needs to reclaim its comparative advantage in the regional security cooperation arena.

## **New Zealand's Immediate Strategic Environment**

New Zealand's strategic environment is unequivocally the Pacific. The nation considers itself a Pacific nation with a considerable *Pasifika* population<sup>1</sup> and with constitutional responsibility for the realm territories of the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau, and a significant marine territory. In 1897, New Zealand Prime Minister Richard Seddon, who viewed New Zealand as a natural leader of island peoples, advocated for the annexation of Pacific Islands as far away as Hawaii. The failure of Britain to develop a Monroe Doctrine for the South Pacific apparently "caused chagrin" in New Zealand as American, German and French influence extended into the region.

Almost a century later, official documents have continued to advance the link between New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. A 1984 report by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs examining New Zealand's relations with its Pacific neighbors declared as one of its assumptions that "New Zealand should recognize that we are part of the Pacific." In 2002, former Labour Government Foreign Minister Phil Goff suggested that "We see ourselves as a Pacific nation with key responsibilities in the South Pacific, with an increasingly important trading and political relationship with Asia."

The legacy of these desires for a South Pacific sphere of influence can be seen in New Zealand's constitutional relationships with Tokelau, Niue and the Cook Islands, and through its Treaty of Friendship with Samoa. The 2010 "Inquiry into New Zealand's Relationships with South Pacific Countries," by Parliament's Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee, acknowledged the nation's increasing Pacific composition and found that "New Zealand

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1 The New Zealand 2013 census showed that 295,941 people identified with one or more Pacific ethnic groups; Pacific peoples were the fourth largest ethnic group, making up 7.4 percent of the population; however the Pasifika population grew by 11.3 percent compared with 14.7 percent the previous census period. <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census.aspx>.

is increasingly part of the regional fabric.” To what extent New Zealand’s alleged “Pacifness” and the rhetoric on championing regional issues and regional sensitivity remains debatable.

Historian Malcolm McKinnon, writing in the 1990s, was skeptical that New Zealand had adopted a stronger Pacific identity. He argued that rather than viewing New Zealand’s regional policies — including concerns over nuclear waste, fisheries, and Law of the Sea issues — as exemplifying a Pacific dimension, they should be seen as a continuation of its independence in foreign policy, of an alternative strategic culture, and reflecting interest-driven policies.<sup>2</sup> This was certainly the case in response to the coup in Fiji in 2006.

Following the Fiji coup, Australia and New Zealand both responded with a similar tone, reflecting a rigid, non-negotiable and principled stance; a stance that was appropriate from a neo-liberal democratic perspective, but has been quietly criticized for lacking a more nuanced appreciation of the cultural and political context. As former New Zealand diplomat Gerald McGhie pointed out, while rhetoric on New Zealand’s Pacific-orientation and engagement with the region is oft-repeated, the country has yet to fully address the complex nature of problems facing Pacific states; this requires a change in approach.

The paradox of New Zealand’s relationship with the Pacific is that New Zealand sits both within the region, but also on the periphery. A colonial history, current constitutional obligations, and its role as a development donor to the region, places New Zealand alongside Australia with the regional periphery powers of France, United Kingdom, and the United States. Geography, culture and historical linkages therefore serve to situate New Zealand in the region and on its periphery. In recognition of its shifting strategic environment, New Zealand is increasingly playing a critical role as a conduit

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<sup>2</sup> Malcolm McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1993), 271.

or bridge between the periphery powers, non-traditional powers seeking an increased role in the region, and Pacific Islands themselves.

Since the U.S. rebalance to the Asia-Pacific and the resumption of high-level ties between Washington and Wellington,<sup>3</sup> there has been a clear expectation that New Zealand will support American interests in the region. The 2010 Wellington Declaration states New Zealand and the United States are both Pacific nations; our governments and peoples share a deep and abiding interest in maintaining peace, prosperity and stability in the region; and cites practical cooperation in the Pacific region in the areas of renewable energy, disaster response management, and climate adaptation.

The 2012 Washington Declaration on defense cooperation between the United States and New Zealand includes maritime security cooperation, including strengthening maritime domain awareness, maritime security presence and capabilities, and humanitarian and disaster relief preparedness.<sup>4</sup> The two landmark declarations restoring relations between the two countries have led to growing questions about the impact of the renewed U.S.-New Zealand relationship on the Pacific Islands. Since Eleanor Lattimore wrote in November 1945 that “the United States proposes to make an American lake out of the Pacific Ocean,”<sup>5</sup> U.S. interest in the region over the past 70 years has proven more ambivalent than ambitious. For Pacific Island countries, the pivot has been underwhelming and there is regular debate that the region is once again the object of geopolitical contestations.

The “China in the Pacific: The View From Oceania” conference, held in Samoa in February 2015, sought to address some of these concerns and successfully highlighted three key issues: the variance in views towards Chinese

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3 The Wellington Declaration was signed in 2010.

4 “Washington Declaration on Defence Cooperation Between the Department of Defense of the United States of America and the Ministry Defence of New Zealand and the New Zealand Defence Force,” June 19, 2012.

5 Eleanor Lattimore, “Pacific Ocean or American Lake? Far Eastern Survey,” November 7, 1945, 14(22), 313-316.

engagement; Beijing's lack of a clear and coherent "Pacific Strategy" in the region; and the depth of personal relationships being built between the Chinese and their counterparts in the Pacific Islands.

New Zealand's engagement with China on a water infrastructure development project in the Cook Islands is an example of how New Zealand has effectively harnessed China's strategic interests in the Pacific with the development needs of a Pacific Island country. This type of bilateral partnership is viewed as a discreet benchmark for development practice in the region. At the 2014 Pacific Islands Forum Post-Forum Dialogue, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said New Zealand was leading the way in working with China on Pacific development projects, and that her nation would model its regional cooperation with China on New Zealand initiatives.<sup>6</sup>

Significantly, New Zealand's oldest and most longstanding peripheral partnership is with Australia, and it is one of convergence and divergence, competition and collaboration. New Zealand is at times uncomfortable with Australia's "sphere of influence" approach to the Pacific Islands region, but will bandwagon where necessary. What is clear is that the increasing divergence between Australia and New Zealand on defense capability and political agendas may have potential ramifications for regional security cooperation. This is particularly in relation to defense interoperability, differing policy approaches to key issues of concern in the region, such as China's rise, and, most significantly, an understanding of the region which is not always complimentary.

Moreover, with regards to Fiji – and by extension the region – there is the most room for divergence. Following the resumption of Australian-Fijian diplomatic ties and the lifting of sanctions, Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop's visit to Fiji in November 2014 revealed a potential estrangement in trans-Tasman relations. Bishop's and Fiji Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimara-

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6 "New Zealand and China collaborate on world first in development," New Zealand Aide Programme, September 2012, <http://www.aid.govt.nz/media-and-publications/development-stories/september-2012/new-zealand-and-china-collaborate-world-fi>.

ma's announcement that a meeting (hereafter, the Sydney Meeting) would be held in early 2015 with the aim of reviewing the regional architecture caught New Zealand and the rest of the Pacific Islands by surprise.

Bainimarama's diplomatic seduction, combined with Bishop's inexperience in regional politics, resulted in the successful conflation of two critical issues in regional governance; the first of which is Fiji's readmission as a member of the Pacific Islands Forum. Since its expulsion from the Forum in 2009, Fiji has categorically stated that it would only return if Australia and New Zealand were downgraded from full members to development partner status. The second issue is the role of non-traditional periphery partners in the Pacific, such as China, Japan, South Korea, France and the United States,<sup>7</sup> and the impact and influence of larger power tensions and geopolitics on Pacific governance and security.

These are distinct issues wrongfully conflated. Moreover, the failure of both Australia and Fiji to consult with other Forum member countries has signaled a potential schism in regional dynamics. It heralded a divergence in Canberra-Wellington relations where traditionally the two countries have presented a common front. It also signaled an emerging nascent geopolitical competition between Fiji and Papua New Guinea (PNG). The regional competition between Fiji and PNG has been further intensified by PNG becoming a regional development donor as well as recipient; increased PNG investment in Melanesian states; and the appointment of PNG's Dame Meg Taylor as Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum.

Fiji considers itself the natural "hub and leader" of the Pacific and the region's leading defense actor. PNG Prime Minister Peter O'Neill responded to Fiji's refusal to rejoin the Forum unless Australia and New Zealand are excluded by calling for a dialogue and a common sense approach that rec-

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<sup>7</sup> "Analyst says Aust/Fiji Forum deal concerning," *Dateline Pacific*, November 3, 2014.

ognized “that we all live in the same region and Australia and New Zealand are very much part of that region.”<sup>8</sup>

The Sydney Meeting was postponed indefinitely in March 2015.<sup>9</sup> The delay has given Canberra much-needed time to consider the implications of Fiji’s proposal and the opportunity for Forum member states to consult amongst themselves prior to the Forum Leader’s Meeting in late 2015. The delay has also given Fiji further opportunity to consolidate its relationships with non-regional defense and economic partners, such as the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, India, China, Russia and Indonesia. From New Zealand’s perspective, it is a critical time to re-evaluate the shifting geopolitical dynamics within the region and the consequences for New Zealand’s influence.

## **New Zealand Engagement with Regional Security Cooperation Mechanisms**

New Zealand does not have a formal strategy to guide its regional security cooperation, but rather employs a patchwork of bilateral and multilateral engagements. This ad hoc approach has resulted in some within the security and defense community to call for a more coherent strategy. Whether a regional security strategy would necessarily better inform and guide New Zealand’s contribution to regional security cooperation is debatable, given the complexities of the issues facing the Pacific Islands region. What is clear is that while defense and law enforcement cooperation is a considerable part of New Zealand’s regional security cooperation strategy, there is deep regional engagement involving a cross-section of multiple government agencies despite the absence of a whole-of-government strategy. Certainly, the country would benefit from greater cross-sectoral engagement in order to develop more nuanced approaches and responses. Government departments are in-

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8 “Papua New Guinea PM Peter O’Neill dismisses Fiji’s push to remove Australia from Pacific Islands Forum,” Australian Broadcasting Corporation, November 28, 2014, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-11-28/png-pm-wants-australia-to-remain-in-pacific-regional-body/5926014>.

9 Bainimarama was rumoured to be “unavailable.”

herently vulnerable to the silo effect where information is not shared across agencies and lessons learned are not transferred.

For New Zealand, there has been a consistent emphasis that Pacific Islands' security is a shared responsibility. Official New Zealand government documents consistently emphasize the centrality of regional security issues to the nation. This regional focus is underpinned in the "Defence White Paper 2010" (DWP 10); "2014 Defence Capability Plan" (DCP); "Headquarters New Zealand Defence Force: The 2013 - 2016 Statement of Intent;" the recent "Defence Midpoint Rebalancing Review" (DMRR); and the May 2014 Cabinet review of peace support operations. Continued focus on regional security issues has informed, for example, the acquisition of military capabilities, such as joint amphibious capability systems. Alongside growing collective regional efforts, New Zealand has been providing extensive support to law and justice sector reforms. Targeted assistance has been provided to improve policing and crime prevention, access to and delivery of justice services, accountability mechanisms, and to reduce corruption in Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

The Pacific Security Cooperation Committee is the central oversight body managing the Pacific Security Fund. The fund, established in 2003 under the leadership of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, aims to enhance the region's security environment. The annual fund of \$3 million is accessible by New Zealand law enforcement and border control agencies to provide training and other support to Pacific Island countries. Projects funded to date include assisting Pacific Island states with becoming compliant with the International Maritime Organisation's International Ships and Port Security Code, and customs laws. The Fund also provides a forum for discussing security issues. There are recommendations that the Fund's scope be broadened to include projects that may be outside New Zealand's immediate interests, but which are highly relevant to Pacific partners.

Other security cooperation mechanisms in support of New Zealand foreign policy objectives include the New Zealand Mutual Assistance Programme (MAP).<sup>10</sup> This is a New Zealand Army training assistance programme that includes training assistance to Tonga, PNG, Samoa, Cook Islands, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Niue. The MAP supports New Zealand Defence Force initiatives to strengthen the capabilities and effectiveness of regional security forces through the development of professional skills rather than the provision of equipment.

In regards to conflict resolution in the region, New Zealand spearheaded a new approach to intervention and peacemaking in Bougainville in the 1990s; a context and mission-specific form of hybrid peacebuilding. The nation led the way in reintegrating development specialists and diplomats into a peace support operation that also incorporated cultural and customary approaches to peacemaking. New Zealand's experiences and the lessons learned in the early days of the Bougainville peace process — including the highly successful, but provocative decision that the initial deployment, the Truce Monitoring Group, would be deployed to the island unarmed — still need to be better integrated into current regional security cooperation mechanisms.

From a regional perspective, as a member of the Pacific Islands Forum and the Forum Regional Security Committee, New Zealand's approach to regional security cooperation is guided by the Biketawa Declaration and other key regional declarations.<sup>11</sup> New Zealand supported the Biketawa Declaration-mandated Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI); the Pacific Regional Assistance to Nauru (PRAN, 2004); and the decision to sanction Fiji following the 2006 coup. New Zealand's contribu-

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10 The MAP was originally created to provide training assistance to Tonga, Singapore and Malaysia. It has since been expanded to the Philippines, Thailand, Brunei, Papua New Guinea, Western Samoa, Cook Islands, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Niue.

11 The Honiara Declaration on Law Enforcement Cooperation (1992), the Waigani Convention (1995), the Aitutaki Declaration on Regional Security Cooperation (1997), the Nasonini Declaration on Regional Security (2002).

tions to RAMSI were substantial, but there has yet to be a comprehensive analysis of the nation's cost benefit and lessons learned from the RAMSI experience.<sup>12</sup>

New Zealand is also party to several multilateral frameworks with periphery partners, which effectively exclude Pacific Islands Forum nations, although they are designed to strengthen regional security. These include FRANZ, the QUADRILATERAL Agreement, and, more recently, a reinvigorated version of ANZUS, a result of recent re-engagement between the New Zealand and U.S. militaries. New Zealand's approach to regional security cooperation has traditionally been backed by strong bipartisan political will, but it has limited assets and resources with which to act. Allegations that New Zealand has been conducting mass surveillance of Pacific Island countries<sup>13</sup> has been met with quiet disapproval by the region's political leaders and undermines the fabric of political and personal trust between New Zealand and the region.

## **Effective and Resilient Regional Security Cooperation Mechanisms**

Security cooperation mechanisms can be described as a patchwork of five elements: activities, programs, resources, processes and organizational relationships (RAND, 2012). Security cooperation mechanisms and security governance — at both the regional and national levels — are inter-related and mutually reinforcing.

The key question for New Zealand as a regional security actor is how to measure and evaluate what is effective and therefore resilient? A key challenge in assessing regional security cooperation lies in the choice of benchmarks by which to evaluate progress. Assessing the value of what are es-

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Jenny Hayward-Jones' report on "Australia's Costly Investment in the Solomon Islands," The Lowy Institute, May 8, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> "NZ spying on Pacific 'growing,'" Radio New Zealand, March 5, 2015, <http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/political/267788/nz-spying-on-pacific-growing>.

entially qualitative activities and where the correlation among activities is not always apparent is difficult. Additionally, regional security cooperation mechanisms face critical challenges, including limitations of resources and institutional capacity. The fundamental challenge in assessing security cooperation mechanisms is that the quantitative, or measurable, indicators of efficiency and effectiveness are neither developed nor tracked in a systematic manner. Even qualitative indicators are based more on anecdotal evidence and narrative than structured assessment. A fairer question, then, would be what added value, if any, regional approaches provide compared to available alternatives?

## **And Missed Opportunities**

There are several high-profile and highly significant examples of where Pacific Island countries have not been included in regional security decision-making. These are the missed opportunities to develop resilience. The 2003 - 2014 Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) is an example of a missed opportunity to build effective and resilient regional security cooperation amongst Forum member states. Ultimately, RAMSI supported the creation of a “negative peace” — the freezing of tensions through intervention — but not positive, sustainable, resilient peace. RAMSI was a neo-liberal state-building project that reflected the Howard government’s<sup>14</sup> desire to radically re-engineer the Solomon Islands from the corridors of Canberra. RAMSI was mandated under the Biketawa Declaration with widespread regional support; however, the participation of Pacific Island bureaucrats, civil servants and policy-makers in the strategic planning and day-to-day running of the mission was minimal.

The 2013 report “RAMSI Decade,” commissioned by the Solomon Islands government and the Pacific Islands Forum, acknowledged the mission’s key successes. It also identified a number of factors critical to success in future

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14 John Howard served as prime minister of Australia 1996 – 2007.

interventions. This included addressing the absence of local ownership. The authors of “RAMSI Decade” cautioned against heralding the mission as a successful model for regional intervention because one of its core elements, the rebuilding of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF), is deeply flawed. They relate that RAMSI has contributed to the police force’s demoralization and dependence on outside support. Moreover, earlier reports noted the lack of Solomon Islanders’ and other Pacific Island states’ participatory engagement

## **What Does Success Look Like?**

What are the strengths of regional security cooperation in the Pacific? Regional security cooperation mechanisms at the multilateral and bilateral levels have proven to work in the Pacific. It is arguable, though, that the key strengths of Pacific regional security cooperation remain untapped. The strengths of the Biketawa Declaration lie in its flexibility, cooperative security, and the range of tools it has at its disposal. Combined with the Human Security Framework for the Pacific (2012 - 2015), there is a clear drive and opportunity for the full and inclusive participation of all peoples affected by conflict.

The evidence, including that from New Zealand’s Bougainville experience, suggests that local, inclusive approaches can provide legitimacy, a framework for long-term, self-sustaining efforts, and deeper integrative effects. As a consequence, culture and communication are important part of regional engagement tools.

In measuring the success of security cooperation mechanisms in the Pacific region, three criteria should be considered. The first is legitimacy; the second is effectiveness; and the third is resilience, or robustness. The three are interrelated, but legitimacy underpins effectiveness and resilience. Legitimacy is critical, whether achieved at the local or village level, or national

and regional levels. Without legitimacy, security cooperation mechanisms lack sustainability. And without full and inclusive participation, legitimacy cannot be achieved or sustained.

## **Opportunities for Enhancing Regional Security Cooperation**

New Zealand has contributed to Pacific Islands' regional security by developing and strengthening its own security frameworks and infrastructure, but there remain areas of critical strategic importance. For New Zealand, there has been a consistent emphasis that Pacific Islands' regional security is a shared responsibility. To address future challenges, New Zealand must re-examine its approach to the Pacific in the following five areas:

### ***Development of New Zealand's maritime strategy policy***

When the New Zealand government ratified the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea in July 1996, it acquired a maritime territory between fifteen and twenty times larger than the total land mass of New Zealand. As a consequence, New Zealand is recognized as having one of the largest maritime domains of all coastal states, with an Exclusive Economic Zone considered the world's fourth or fifth largest. Moreover, under its constitutional obligations, New Zealand has responsibility for the maritime territories of Tokelau, Cook Islands and Niue.

However, New Zealand defense strategists suffer from sea blindness. New Zealand has little maritime consciousness despite the Maori legends of ocean voyages from *Hawaiki*. It is a strategic paradox that New Zealand is a marine nation, but not a maritime nation. With the anticipated release of both New Zealand's maritime security policy and the Defence White Paper due in 2015, it is hoped that a comprehensive, overarching maritime strategy is articulated; one that drives increased maritime awareness and capabilities to enable New Zealand to undertake a greater role in monitoring, surveillance, patrolling and protection of its maritime domain.

### ***Advancing the Security-Development Nexus***

Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that “development and security are inextricably linked” and the 2001 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development study on “Security Issues and Development Cooperation” stated that “the security of states and the security of people should be seen as mutually reinforcing.” The emergence of the security-development nexus is critical to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and comprises governance, security sector, and the rule of law. The concept of “developmental peacekeeping” originated in South African scholarship and seeks to create “sustainable levels of human security through activities aimed at accelerating capacity building and socio-economic development, to dismantle war economies and conflict systems, and replace them with globally competitive ‘peace economies.’”

New Zealand has an opportunity and an imperative to ensure that regional security cooperation mechanisms incorporate human security principles in keeping with the comprehensive Pacific Island Forum Human Security Framework for the Pacific (2012 - 2015). The framework is Pacific-centered and includes conflict-sensitive approaches to programming and policies; its core principles are preventative, localized, collaborative, people-centered and inclusive. In practical terms, the framework has significance for New Zealand Defence Force personnel involved in humanitarian assistance and disaster response operations, particularly those in post-conflict countries and fragile cities. An example of NZDF operations includes the 2014 humanitarian assistance and disaster relief response to flooding in the Solomon Islands.

### ***A New Approach to Engaging in Regional Defense Diplomacy***

There is an emerging culture of defense diplomacy within the region and between regional island states and external defense partners (such as the establishment of defense ties between Fiji and a number of countries, includ-

ing Indonesia, Russia, China, and India). New Zealand and Australia are no longer the primary defense partners for Pacific states, and it is critical that New Zealand changes its approach to how it engages with Pacific militaries. Enhancing mechanisms for interaction among security actors is crucial to building resilience within regional security cooperation. Examples include exchanges between the Vanuatu Military Force and PNG Defence Force on the PNG officer cadet course, and PNG and New Caledonia bilateral military field training exercises. While examples given are military-to-military exchanges designed to strengthen regional security cooperation mechanisms, key avenues exist for developing civil-military relations through training and educational exchanges.

### ***Making the UN Non-Permanent Seat Meaningful to the Pacific***

In August 2014, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Security Council Resolution 2167 (2014) affirming the critical role of regional cooperation in international peacekeeping and security. The importance of regional security arrangements has long been encouraged under the so-called subsidiarity principle, but has gained currency as a consequence of the seeming intractability of conflicts and failures of intervention. The resolution does not suggest that regional organizations supplant the United Nations in peacekeeping, but rather that comparative strengths need to be recognized. The resolution calls for regional organizations to strengthen their relationships and develop more effective partnerships. Fiji's statement on the resolution, given by Fijian diplomat Namita Khatri, echoed an accepted truth in peace operations: "regional organizations are likely to have a keener understanding of the local situation and cultures."

New Zealand successfully won a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2015 - 2016 period with the considerable support of the Pacific Island Forum member states. New Zealand regards the role as an opportunity to influence at the reform level, and there is an opportunity for New Zealand to contribute to the transformation of regional UN security

cooperation mechanisms. This includes addressing how the UN can better support, through regional security cooperation mechanisms, local capacities and leadership for local solutions to conflict; and how the United Nations can ensure, through regional security cooperation, greater accountability towards the local population. These questions underpin the overriding one: how will New Zealand bring its win at the United Nations home to the region? How will New Zealand ensure its UN Security Council position is meaningful for Pacific Island states?

## **Conclusion**

New Zealand's perspectives on, and contributions to regional security cooperation mechanisms have remained fairly consistent. New Zealand prides itself on being a good regional security actor; however, there are certain assumptions around New Zealand's role that need to be challenged. New Zealand cannot take its relationship with Pacific Island states — and the goodwill shown to it — for granted. The failure of New Zealand Prime Minister John Key to attend the 2014 Pacific Islands Forum sends signal of ambivalence to both the region and New Zealand's domestic audience about the importance that his government places on the region. The Pacific security complex is a structured matrix of formal and informal cooperation, and increasingly, interdependence, interaction and communication is critical. To build true resilience, regional security cooperation mechanisms need to better reflect the region, and that means more Pacific Islanders in positions of leadership.

New Zealand and other periphery partners need to listen more. Creative approaches to regional security cooperation — looking beyond the formal to informal linkages that strengthen Pacific relations — are essential. New Zealand, if it is to retain its influence in the region in the face of competing states, must re-engage with the region in a far more meaningful manner.