

*Regional Arms Control in the South
Pacific: Island State Responses to
Australia's Nuclear Free Zone Initiative*

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On Hiroshima Day, 6 August 1985, eight South Pacific countries signed the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (SPNFZ) Treaty at a South Pacific Forum meeting in Rarotonga in the Cook Islands. The Rarotonga Treaty, as it is known, is the fifth nuclear-free zone (NFZ) treaty to be established internationally and the first since the Outer Space Treaty was signed in 1971. The only previous NFZ to be established in an inhabited region is the Latin American NFZ (Tlatelolco Treaty).

The treaty is highly selective in its scope and application. On the one hand, it prohibits nuclear-weapons testing and acquisition, land-based stationing of nuclear weapons, and nuclear-waste dumping at sea. On the other, it contains no controls over military ship, submarine, or aircraft transit and associated mobile deployment of nuclear weapons, either on or over the high seas or in or over territorial waters within the zone. Nor does it prohibit the firing of nuclear weapons from the zone, so long as the launch platforms are not land-based and the targets do not lie within the land territories in the zone (for a detailed analysis of the treaty's content and limitations, see Hamel-Green 1990, 24–54).

The limited character of the zone raises several questions. First, what were the motivations and interests that led Australia, as the initiator of the treaty, to pursue a partial rather than more comprehensive denuclearization measure? Second, why did the South Pacific Forum island states, with their long-standing distrust of nuclear “colonialism” generated by past and continuing nuclear-weapon and missile-test programs in the Pacific, support such a limited measure? Third, what are the regional consequences of

the treaty, particularly in the context of the Western powers' withholding of recognition?

In this article, I shall argue that: (1) in advancing a limited initiative, the Australian government was primarily concerned with protecting Australian and US nuclear interests in the region; (2) the Forum island states, especially the Melanesian states, were extremely ambivalent about the treaty, but were constrained from seeking a more comprehensive denuclearized arrangement by their economic and military dependence on Australia, New Zealand, and the United States (ANZUS states); and (3) while the treaty has served to protect immediate key Australian and US nuclear interests in the region, US refusal to ratify the treaty protocols (in contrast to Soviet and Chinese endorsement) has had the paradoxical effect of further alienating some of the island states from the nuclear and security preoccupations of the two main ANZUS security treaty states.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Australia's SPNFZ initiative represented the third of three waves of South Pacific regional interest in the nuclear-free zone concept. The first occurred in 1962–1963 against a background of US and British atmospheric nuclear testing in the Pacific and the decision to locate a US submarine communications base at North West Cape in Western Australia. It involved proposals by the opposition Labour parties in Australia and New Zealand for a Southern Hemisphere Nuclear Free Zone (AHR 1962; NZLP 1963, 25). This proposal was vigorously opposed by the ruling conservative governments in both Australia and New Zealand and by the Kennedy administration in the United States.

The second period of interest in regional denuclearization occurred in 1974–1975 when the New Zealand Rowling Labour government and the South Pacific Forum island states gained UN support for establishing a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone. This initiative emerged in the context of widespread regional concern about fallout from the French atmospheric nuclear tests at Moruroa in French Polynesia and New Zealand concerns about superpower naval rivalry in the Indian Ocean (Alley 1977).

The 1975 New Zealand SPNFZ initiative, while supported strongly by the island states at the July 1975 South Pacific Forum (NZFAR, Jul 1975, 60–

61) and by the UN General Assembly (110 votes to 0, with 20 abstentions) (UN 1975, 43-44, 55-56), was vigorously opposed by the United States and less publicly opposed by the Australian Whitlam Labor government. The primary US concern was the zone's potential restriction of transit of nuclear armed forces, both within territorial waters and on the high seas. In the case of the Whitlam government, under considerable pressure from the United States and embattled at the time with domestic controversy over the raising of overseas loans, the primary concern was a wish to avoid electorally damaging controversy over the impact of the SPNFZ on ANZUS and Australia-United States relations (Walsh and Munster 1980, 127-133). Following the late 1975 election of conservative governments in both New Zealand and Australia, the initiative lapsed.

While the concept died at the official South Pacific Forum level, peace movements and indigenous peoples' groups in many regional countries continued to encourage their respective governments to establish a regional nuclear-free zone. At successive international conferences in 1975, 1978, and 1980, convened by the international Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific network (NFIP), the People's Charter for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific was drafted and amended (NFIP 1980, 17-21). The charter called for establishing a comprehensive nuclear-free zone, decolonization of remaining territories, and recognition of indigenous peoples' rights throughout the Pacific region.

The third wave of regional interest in the nuclear-free-zone concept emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Encouraged by the NFIP network's campaign, several Melanesian governments, including Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, and the Solomons, together with the New Zealand Labour party began to revive and actively promote the SPNFZ concept. In August 1983, in the context of an upsurge in Australian domestic antinuclear sentiment and South Pacific-wide concern over international and regional developments in the nuclear arms race, Australia's newly elected Hawke Labor government officially proposed the SPNFZ initiative at the annual South Pacific Forum, the meeting of heads of state of independent or freely associated South Pacific countries. The proposal was endorsed at the August 1984 Forum, negotiated in the ensuing year through a Forum Working Group chaired by Australia, signed at the 1985 Forum meeting, and, following ratification by eight member states (Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Western Samoa, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Niue, and the Cook Islands), came into force in December 1986.

AUSTRALIAN MOTIVATION FOR PURSUING THE INITIATIVE

The Australian SPNFZ initiative was more a reaction against than a consummation of earlier initiatives. The close alliance between Australia and the United States and extensive Australian involvement in US nuclear strategies made Australia, even under a Labor government, a rather unlikely evangelist for a regional nuclear-free zone concept that was actively opposed by the United States. The paradox is even more acute in light of the Hawke government's pledges, soon after Hawke came to office, of "continuity in foreign policy," commitment to maintaining all existing forms of Australian nuclear cooperation with the United States, and commitment to continued uranium mining (*CR* 1983, 8(7): 216; *AFAR*, Jun 1983, 268; Hamel-Green 1990, 55).

The apparent irony of the regional state with the closest links to a nuclear power actively initiating a regional nuclear-free zone arrangement can be explained. There is evidence that the Rarotonga Treaty was primarily motivated by the Australian government's wish to protect US, ANZUS, and Australian nuclear policies against more comprehensive denuclearization arrangements sought by the Melanesian Alliance states (Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu), the New Zealand Labour party, and domestic peace movements in Australia and New Zealand. (For a fuller discussion of this interpretation of Australia's motivation, see Hamel-Green 1989; and for a differing interpretation see Fry 1983, 1985, 1986, 1987.) The particular US and Australian regional nuclear interests and plans that would have been threatened by more comprehensive denuclearization arrangements are more extensive than might be supposed given the relative remoteness of the South Pacific from the main arenas of superpower confrontation.

The American regional presence includes six broad categories of nuclear activity: (1) permanent bases for nuclear armed forces and storage of nuclear weapons (Guam); (2) frequent transit of nuclear-armed or nuclear-capable naval and air forces across South Pacific waters on a variety of missions, including power projection into the Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia, and the North Pacific; antisubmarine warfare activities; and deployment of long-range sea-launched cruise missiles for counterforce purposes; (3) a complex network of nuclear-weapon-related communications, intelligence, command, control, navigation, and scientific bases in Micronesia (Guam and Kwajalein), Australia, and New Zealand; (4) mis-

sile, antisatellite, and strategic defense initiative (Star Wars) testing at Kwajalein; (5) disposal of nuclear- and chemical-weapon hazardous wastes (Marshall Islands, Johnston Island); and (6) involvement in a military alliance with a regional state, Australia, through the ANZUS security treaty, that could be invoked either to defend regional states with nuclear weapons or to involve regional states in contributing to US nuclear-war fighting activities outside the region. (Overviews of the US nuclear presence in the region may be found in Feeney and Tow 1982, 163–225; Arkin and Fieldhouse 1985, 117–129, 214–249; and Hayes, Zarsky, and Bello 1986, 145–267).

During the early 1980s, the United States was particularly concerned about international or regional obstacles to the Reagan administration's plans to modernize and expand its naval and strategic forces. The plans were to: (1) expand the surface navy from 345 to 600 major combatant vessels (thus a need for increased rest and recreation and refueling visits at foreign ports); (2) deploy approximately 370 nuclear Tomahawk sea-launched cruise missiles on a variety of platforms in the Pacific fleets and similarly equip B52s at Guam with air-launched cruise missiles; and (3) upgrade operations at Kwajalein Missile Testing Range to test new generations of missiles (MX, Trident II) and strategic defense initiative systems. The United States' concern to ensure Australian and New Zealand acceptance of its views on the need for nuclear-capable ship visits and Tomahawk cruise-missile deployment was reflected in visits to Canberra and Wellington in 1982 by Deputy Secretary of State Walter Stoessel and Eugene Rostow, head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (Pugh 1989, 127).

In the context of the close military and nuclear links between Australia and the United States and the relatively high level of electoral support for the ANZUS alliance in Australia, the new Australian Labor government gave full support to these US views and was anxious to protect its own economic nuclear interests in the form of uranium export.

AUSTRALIA'S PREEMPTION STRATEGY

The Australian government advanced a limited-scope, limited-domain zone (excluding the Micronesian trust territory states) that was primarily directed at channeling domestic and regional antinuclear sentiment against third-party non-ANZUS nuclear activities in the form of French

nuclear testing. It also exempted and legitimized all existing and contemplated US, ANZUS and Australian regional nuclear activities. In doing these things, the Australian government sought to secure ANZUS nuclear interests and preempt more comprehensive zone arrangements favored by island states and domestic antinuclear constituencies in both Australia and New Zealand.

The Australian government's preemption strategy was partially acknowledged by the chief Australian negotiator (and chairman of the SPNFZ Working Group), David Sadlier, when he told a visiting US Congressional delegation in 1986 that:

Australia assumed a leadership role in the Forum in order to provide a rational and responsible guide in developing the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty. It feared that some of the more emotional nations might take a more radical position in opposing French testing. The aim of Australia, according to Mr Sadlier, was to channel the efforts of the Forum into a constructive program. He believes this approach has been successful, as some of the nations favored going much further than the treaty. (USASC 1986, 15)

Since the treaty provisions themselves included the strongest possible prohibitions against French testing, and there was no record in the negotiations of other Forum states seeking stronger provisions against French nuclear programs, Sadlier's reference to other Forum countries taking "a more radical position" can be interpreted as referring to only non-French—presumably US and Australian—nuclear activities in the region.

When the Hawke government initiated the SPNFZ proposal (1983–1984), it was acutely aware of a regional trend toward denuclearization. This trend included such developments as the strongly antinuclear national and regional policies of the New Zealand Labour party, whose electoral fortunes were discernibly recovering in the early eighties and which regained power in July 1984; the emergence of newly independent Vanuatu as a forceful island advocate of comprehensive denuclearization; Papua New Guinea's adoption of a 1981 foreign policy proposing an islands-only regional organization and SPNFZ; the 1981 antinuclear shift in Solomon Islands foreign policy under Mamaloni resulting in Solomons' active promotion of the regional SPNFZ concept; the 1979–1980 adoption by Belau of a nuclear-free constitution banning both nuclear-weapon stationing and transit within Belauan territory; the 1980 adoption by the Federated States of Micronesia of a constitution containing antinuclear provisions; and the

strong support of the island states for nuclear-free zone initiatives at the United Nations during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

This antinuclear trend among island states, complementing a rapid growth of antinuclear sentiment in Australia and New Zealand during the same period (Camilleri 1987, 102–128), was related to two circumstances. First was the long-standing bitterness of island states about the adverse health and social consequences of Western nuclear and missile-testing programs in the region, including the more than 150 atmospheric tests in the Pacific conducted by the United States, Britain, and France from 1945 to 1974 and the further underground testing conducted by France from 1975 onward. Second were the island states' concerns about nuclear transit, bases, and infrastructure in the region, including concerns about becoming nuclear targets and loss of sovereignty and independence resulting from nuclear and allied powers wishing to maintain hegemony over the region for strategic reasons. (For overviews of island states' responses to nuclear issues in the region, see Van Dyke, Smith, and Siwatibau 1983, 37–57; Firth 1987; Johnson 1984; Weisgall 1980, 74–98; Dibblin 1988; for implications for sovereignty and independence, see Firth 1989.)

A SPNFZ initiated by New Zealand under a Labour government or the Melanesian Alliance states might have contained elements that would have threatened US and ANZUS nuclear and strategic policies. Australia would then have found itself under strong regional and domestic pressure either to participate in a SPNFZ arrangement perceived as inimical to ANZUS and Australian nuclear policies and likely to strain its alliance with the United States or to stay out of any zone arrangement and risk loss of regional influence and the establishment of a rival islands-only regional organization. The latter development would have served to shift the regional focus away from the traditional Western alignment of regional organizations toward more independent regional security policies. Either alternative was unpalatable from the perspective of the long-term protection of US and Australian strategic and nuclear policies in the region.

ISLAND STATES' RESPONSES TO AUSTRALIA'S SPNFZ INITIATIVE

Island states' responses to the treaty, disclosed in the Australian chairman's official record of the negotiations (SPF 1985) and in public comments by island leaders before and after the treaty was signed, reveal considerable ambivalence about its content. Despite this ambivalence, all the Forum

island states, except Vanuatu and Tonga, eventually signed and ratified the treaty. Even Vanuatu, the most antinuclear and anticolonial of the Melanesian states, though unwilling to sign the treaty, did not actively pursue an islands-only comprehensive zone arrangement. Acceptance by most of the island states of the partial and selective denuclearization arrangements embodied in the Rarotonga Treaty may be attributed to four principal factors: (1) the perceived modest arms-control gains offered by the treaty in relation to long-standing island nuclear concerns; (2) Australia's negotiating strategy of promising US support for the treaty if compromises were accepted (as it happened, US endorsement was not forthcoming); (3) the widespread economic dependence of island states on Australia, New Zealand, and the United States; and (4) close defense linkages between some island states and the ANZUS states.

INITIAL SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM RESPONSES

From the inception in 1971 of the South Pacific Forum, its member states took a strong collective stand against French testing and repeatedly called for an end to the testing. This issue and wider concern over potential regional involvement in superpower nuclear conflicts first led the Forum states to support the New Zealand Labour government's 1975 proposal to establish a regional SPNFZ (AFAR 1975, 406). This early Forum consensus on the desirability of establishing a SPNFZ did not reach the stage of detailed negotiation and drafting since the conservative governments that came to office in both New Zealand and Australia at the end of 1975 opposed implementation of the concept on the grounds that it was "impractical" and likely to adversely affect ANZUS obligations. While Fiji, Western Samoa, and Papua New Guinea indicated at the March 1976 Forum meeting that they wished to proceed with negotiations, the island states were bound by the Forum consensus principle and therefore could not proceed in the absence of support from Australia and New Zealand.

Over the next six years, the Forum states did not collectively pursue the concept of a regional nuclear-free zone, although the Melanesian members individually continued to promote the idea. The Forum did, however, from 1979 onward, become concerned with the additional nuclear issue of regional waste dumping as a collective response to both Japanese and American plans for nuclear waste dumping in the region. Forum communiqués from 1979 on strongly condemned both waste storage and ocean waste dumping in the region (AFAR, 1983, 7-II, 409; 1984, 799).

When Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke first proposed the new SPNFZ proposal at the 1983 Forum meeting, he sought a draft declaration of a SPNFZ that would prohibit the acquisition, testing, receipt, storage, stationing, and control of nuclear weapons in the region but permit transit of nuclear weapons in international territory and territorial transit and port calls at the discretion of individual governments (ADFA 1983, 11-12). He argued that the language of the 1975 SPNFZ proposal was "considered by some to be too rigid and was seen as being in conflict with commitments under ANZUS" and that Australia believed that unless its allies could rely on port access, there would be "little enthusiasm for the [SPNFZ] treaty" (SPF 1983). The proposed declaration would pave the way for a Tlatelolco-type treaty that "could be taken up in the U.N. [and] provide a rallying point for opposition to French testing" (ADFA 1983, 11-12). Australia further emphasized that it did not envisage the zone as seeking to regulate uranium mining and export or commercial nuclear-power generation (*ibid*). The Australian initiative sought to insulate both ANZUS and Australian nuclear interests from the scope of the SPNFZ proposal while holding out to island states the prospects of American backing for the zone and a more forceful campaign against French nuclear testing, particularly at the UN.

The island states responded cautiously and, in some cases, critically to the proposal. Several of the Melanesian states, together with the Cook Islands, criticized the proposal for not going far enough; others, notably Fiji and Tonga, supported the Australian concept of permitting transit. However, Australia was successful in securing Forum willingness to reconsider the idea the following year.

One year later, at the August 1984 Forum meeting at Tuvalu, Australia resubmitted its SPNFZ proposal in amended form. This time Australia was successful in gaining Forum agreement to establish a Working Group, chaired by Australia, to negotiate a treaty based on the Australian proposal. The Forum meeting, which included the newly elected Labour prime minister of New Zealand, David Lange, endorsed seven principles advanced by Australia. These principles, adopted as guidelines by the Forum SPNFZ Working Group, embodied opposition to some of the unpopular nuclear activities in the region, such as testing, stationing, and environmental contamination, but not to others, such as missile testing. The principles sought, through insistence on sovereign rights to permit or deny port access for foreign vessels, to protect current and future nuclear-weapons transit in the region (AFAR 1984, 800).

While the Melanesian states continued to press for more comprehensive zone arrangements, the New Zealand Labour government, despite its dispute with the United States about refusing to accept nuclear-ship visits and its generally strong antinuclear stance, sided with the limited-scope Australian SPNFZ initiative. To avoid further repercussions from either of its ANZUS partners, the Lange Labour government was anxious to reassure both the United States and Australia that it was not seeking to "export" its "nuclear allergy" to the rest of the South Pacific region (Hamel-Green 1990, 72-81).

The mutually reinforcing support of Australia and New Zealand and their success in winning over the support of Polynesian states and Fiji were sufficient to gain agreement from the more reluctant Melanesian and Micronesian Forum members to the idea of immediately proceeding with regional Forum negotiations for the SPNFZ proposal. Melanesian support for immediate negotiations on the basis of the Australian SPNFZ guidelines took place in the context of the simultaneously advanced Australian offer of patrol boats to help island states police their exclusive economic zones. This offer created considerable inducement, over and above Australia's normal aid programs, to respond to Australian regional diplomacy.

Following the 1984 Tuvalu Forum's agreement to set up a SPNFZ Working Group chaired by Australia, there was a series of four Working Group meetings between November 1984 and May 1985 to develop a draft treaty.

ISLAND STATES' RESPONSES DURING TREATY NEGOTIATIONS 1984-1985

The official record of the negotiations reveals that the Melanesian Alliance states had serious misgivings about the limitations of Australia's zone proposal. This was consistent with the strong emphasis on regional denuclearization evident in the three states' policies from the time they gained independence.

As early as 1974, Papua New Guinea's (PNG) first foreign minister, Albert Maori Kiki, strongly supported zones of peace and neutrality in the Pacific. In 1975, PNG cosponsored the New Zealand motion at the UN General Assembly for establishment of a SPNFZ; and in 1981, PNG's Foreign Policy White Paper recommended that PNG "seek to have the islands region declared a nuclear-weapons-free zone" and proposed that a new regional organization of Pacific island states with control over their own foreign policy be established to negotiate a regional nuclear-free zone

treaty and other agreements aimed at excluding rivalries between external powers within the region (*PNGFA* 1982, 37–38, 79). Specific PNG policies included the protection of the regional environment from the effects of nuclear testing and nuclear waste dumping and refusal to host foreign bases with actual or potential military use since these could make PNG a target in a conflict that did not directly involve it. During the early 1980s, PNG continued to actively promote the SPNFZ in international forums, had a restrictive (though not totally excluding) policy on nuclear-armed ship visits, and refused US requests for B52 overflights originating from Guam.

In the Solomons, the Mamaloni government of 1981 similarly took a strong stance of supporting regional denuclearization and nuclear-free zones. The more conservative 1984 Kenilorea government, after initially accepting a controversial US ship visit that stimulated sharp protests from Solomons' peace movement, church, and union members, adopted a consistent antinuclear stance of prohibiting nuclear-ship visits and supporting a comprehensive nuclear-free zone.

Vanuatu, independent from 1980, was the most vocal of the Melanesian states in pursuing regional denuclearization policies. At the 1981 South Pacific Conference, Prime Minister Walter Lini argued:

It is a matter of life and death that our Pacific ocean be declared a nuclear-free zone. Testing of any kind must be outlawed, as must the dumping of nuclear waste, the firing of nuclear devices and the passage of submarines or overflying aircraft carrying them. (Sope 1982, 1)

In both regional forums and the United Nations, Vanuatu representatives repeatedly emphasized the need for a nuclear-free zone that would go beyond testing and dumping to ban nuclear transit and called for opposition to all forms of "nuclear colonialism" (Robie 1986, vii–viii).

In the treaty negotiations, the Melanesian alliance states showed particular concern about loopholes in six areas: (1) nuclear-weapons transit and de facto stationing; (2) missile testing; (3) zone boundaries; (4) nuclear-waste dumping; (5) uranium export to nuclear-weapon states; and (6) lack of comprehensiveness.

Nuclear-Weapons Transit and De Facto Stationing

Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu voiced strong concerns that the treaty's lack of regulation of port visits by nuclear-armed vessels could lead

to some form of de facto stationing. The two states proposed that the treaty impose time limits on the "duration and pattern of port visits" (SPEC 1985, 16). Despite Australia's rejection of this proposal, PNG noted its "continued interest in the duration of ship visits" and sought a "prior warning" requirement for nuclear-ship visits. The issue of de facto stationing is by no means a remote possibility: in 1981, for example, one analyst estimated that there were US nuclear-powered and nuclear-armed attack submarines visiting Stirling Naval Base in Western Australia some twenty to twenty-five percent of the time (Ball 1983, 155).

Missile Testing

Island states have frequently voiced concerns about US, Soviet, and Chinese missile testing in the Pacific and, more specifically, about the economic and social plight of Marshall Islanders displaced from their home islands to make way for the US missile range at Kwajalein. In accord with these concerns, PNG, the Solomons, Vanuatu, and Nauru all expressed concern that the treaty did not seek to ban missile testing in the region (SPEC 1985, 27).

Zone Boundaries

Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu challenged the idea that the northern boundaries of the treaty be fixed at the equator, thereby excluding the three Micronesian states (Belau, Federated States of Micronesia, and Marshall Islands) despite their eligibility for becoming full members of the South Pacific Forum (FSM and the Marshalls subsequently became full members). From the PNG and Vanuatu point of view, there was no reason for excluding island states that were already directly linked to the South Pacific through the South Pacific Commission and in the process of forging closer links with the Forum itself; PNG expressed its "continued preference" for the treaty to be based on the South Pacific Commission boundaries (SPEC 1985, 10). The most likely explanation for Australia's wish to exclude the former trust territory states was to avoid conflict with the United States since the antistationing provisions of the Rarotonga Treaty might have come into direct conflict with US efforts to retain nuclear-weapons storage and basing rights under its Compact of Free Association agreements with these states (Hamel-Green 1990, 44-46).

Nuclear-Waste Dumping

Papua New Guinea and the Solomons were concerned that the antidumping provisions of the treaty did not extend to external potential dumpers, such as Japan, and proposed a fourth protocol to the treaty that would "invite potential dumpers to undertake commitments against dumping in the zone" (SPEC 1985, 19). This proposal was rejected by Australia on the grounds that it would prejudice a successful outcome to the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) negotiations on a regional environmental convention. As it happened, the regional convention did not include Japan among its signatories.

Uranium Exports to Nuclear-Weapon States

Vanuatu sought a prohibition on transfers of nuclear materials under safeguards to nuclear-weapon states (SPEC 1985, 27). While the island states appeared to accept the safeguarded export of nuclear materials to nonnuclear-weapon states under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, they questioned whether there was any similar obligation to nuclear-weapon states, particularly in view of the possibility that safeguards might not be adequate to prevent nuclear-weapon states diverting nuclear materials to their nuclear-weapons programs.

Lack of Comprehensiveness

Both the Solomons and Vanuatu strongly attacked the lack of comprehensiveness in the treaty. At a press conference at the 1985 Rarotonga South Pacific Forum meeting, Vanuatu's Prime Minister Walter Lini argued that the treaty would not be effective in keeping out the nuclear powers, including the French, the Russians, and the Americans; was too selective in including New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna but not the American territories in Micronesia; was ineffective in controlling waste dumping since it did not cover territorial waters; should have included bans on nuclear-weapon delivery systems and uranium mining; and failed to consider the wishes of island peoples in keeping the region free of nuclear threats (Hamel-Green 1990, 92). The treaty would mean "a failure to achieve a comprehensive nuclear free zone."

Lini further noted that the Forum's consensus mode of operation had been abused to arrive at endorsement of the treaty: "We were sorry to see that consensus is sometimes used to get something that only some mem-

bers of the Forum want." Although Vanuatu did not rule out signing the treaty later, its policy was to broaden the zone's scope and boundaries. "It is the governments of the South Pacific that have difficulty in signing a comprehensive nuclear-free Pacific treaty, not the people," Lini emphasized later in a documentary film on the issue (*PIM*, Jan 1989, 17).

ATTITUDES OF FIJI AND THE POLYNESIAN STATES

By contrast with the Melanesian Alliance states, Fiji under the Mara government and the Polynesian members of the South Pacific Forum (with the exception of Tonga) did not publicly criticize or express reservations about the limited nature of the SPNFZ treaty.

While Fiji was a strong supporter of the New Zealand 1975 SPNFZ initiative and adopted a policy of excluding nuclear-ship visits in the late 1970s, the 1980–1983 Mara government's shift toward closer alignment with the United States, culminating in the 1983 formal decision to accept US nuclear-ship visits, meant that the Fiji government shared much the same perception as the Australian government on the need to limit the scope of the zone. Ratu Mara even warned at the 1984 South Pacific Forum that Fiji would not sign the treaty if it imposed bans on nuclear-warship visits (*SPEC* 1984).

However, the Mara government's view of the treaty did not necessarily reflect a consensus within Fiji. The policies of the brief one-month Bavadra government before the May 1987 military coup suggested that many Fijians shared the same ambivalence toward the treaty as the Melanesian Alliance states. Dr Bavadra criticized the Mara government for signing the Rarotonga Treaty and said that a Fiji Labour government would withdraw from the treaty and fight for a stronger one:

The Fiji government, regrettably, has already signed and ratified the existing Treaty. On the one hand, it professes to support the concept of a nuclear-free Pacific but, on the other, it signs a treaty which it knows falls far short of that ideal. (*FS*, 6 Aug 1986)

In Bavadra's view, the treaty was a "useless document" for preventing nuclear activities in the region, and the escape clauses included in the protocols were a "farce" (*STF*, 10 Aug 1986).

The antinuclear stance of the Bavadra government might have been one of the factors that led to the May 1987 military coup. The coup leader,

Colonel Rabuka, cited as one of the reasons for mounting the coup a concern that the Bavadra government's ban on nuclear ships and its policy of nonalignment would "harm the interests of major allies, notably the United States" (Sanday 1988, 34). A recent study of the ANZUS nuclear-ships crisis similarly notes that this was a factor in the coup and that "the prospect of a nuclear visit ban in Fiji added to alarm in Washington and Hawaii about naval visits in the South Pacific" (Pugh 1989, 165). Such a US reaction is consistent with circumstantial evidence of US collusion with the coup leaders (*ibid*).

While most of the Polynesian members of the South Pacific Forum, including the Cook Islands, Western Samoa, Tuvalu, and Niue, generally supported Australia's limited SPNFZ concept, the conservative monarchic government of Tonga considered that the zone went too far rather than not far enough. Following a brief, well-publicized flirtation with the idea of seeking Soviet economic aid, Tonga received substantial increases in economic and military aid from the ANZUS states during the late 1970s and early 1980s. In 1978, Tonga became the first independent Pacific Island state to accept visits by nuclear warships. While supporting moves against nuclear testing and waste dumping, Tonga took exception to the anti-storage and antistationing provisions of the Rarotonga Treaty (SPEC 1983). In the Tongan government's view, the United States should have the right to store and station nuclear weapons in South Pacific countries, especially in wartime.

FACTORS IN SECURING ISLAND SUPPORT FOR THE TREATY

Despite the strong reservations expressed by the Melanesian states, Australia succeeded in eventually securing the signature of almost all the eligible Forum states, only Vanuatu and Tonga not having signed as of June 1989. Further, the island states did not move to negotiate a more comprehensive arrangement, as either an alternative or a complement to the Rarotonga Treaty. The treaty, while obviously not to the satisfaction of the Melanesian states, successfully preempted the possibility of an alliance between the island states and New Zealand, or the formation of an islands-only organization, that might have negotiated more comprehensive denuclearization arrangements, options that the island states seemed to be moving toward in the early 1980s.

Island support for the treaty cannot be explained by simply assuming

that island states share the same security perceptions and priorities as the ANZUS states. Even allowing for the traditionally pro-Western alignment of most of the island states, particularly the Polynesian states, island states see regional security priorities in very different terms from the ANZUS states.

Rather than viewing the principal threat to regional security as an external military threat by a major power such as the Soviet Union, the island states perceive the greatest threat to be economic insecurity, as was evident at the 1984 Wellington colloquium on the special problems of small island states. Economic vulnerability is usually seen as arising from the small size and scale of island economies, transportation costs and problems associated with remoteness, dependence on a limited range of primary industries (most frequently coconut products, fishing, and minerals), limited natural resources (particularly in the Polynesian and Micronesian islands), and rising expectations of increases in living standards (*PIM*, Oct 1987, 37).

Similarly, the PNG prime minister (and former foreign minister), Rab-
bie Namaliu, assessed the threat of unprovoked attack on an island country by an external power as "slight," but noted that the threat of destabilization of an island state for "profit or ideology," possibly associated with great-power rivalry, was "more likely" and that the most likely threats lay in "domestic instability in New Caledonia" and "domestic internal threats to individual states" (*AFAR* 1983, 417). Namaliu's reference to destabilization associated with great-power rivalry was concerned not only with potential Soviet activities but also with potential economic, political, and military activities of Western governments or business interests. The US invasion of Grenada and the establishment of rapid deployment forces in all three ANZUS states did not inspire confidence in the Western camp on the part of island states.

Island countries do not necessarily share the ANZUS states' fears about the Soviet Union exploiting commercial relations with island states as the thin end of the wedge to a Soviet military presence ashore. Rather, both Melanesian and Micronesian states—including Vanuatu, Solomons, and Kiribati—view fishing agreements and other commercial relations with the Soviet Union as a means of becoming more self-reliant economically. As the former PNG foreign secretary, Tony Siaguru, commented:

Pacific Island leaders are certainly sufficiently aware of the dangers of allowing Russia a political toehold in their countries to take the necessary preventative measures. But it would be hard for anyone to deny that the presence of the Russians has brought and continues to bring, directly and vicariously, much economic benefit to the impoverished Pacific Island states. Even if Russia is paying over the market price for facilities, we stand a little taller with this form of aid than we do with the usual tied hand-outs. (*PIM*, May 1987, 18)

The argument that the SPNFZ must permit US nuclear-weapons transit in the region as a "counter" to the Soviet military threat regionally and globally seemed somewhat remote from the island states' own assessment of the security threats facing them and even counterproductive given the possibility of provoking great-power military rivalry in the region. Island states' support for or acquiescence in the treaty and reluctance to negotiate a more comprehensive islands-only treaty were more plausibly the outcome of a combination of incentives and constraints. These derived not only from island states' common nuclear concerns but also from their economic dependence and vulnerability.

The first incentive was the promised potential of the zone for putting pressure on France to cease testing in the region—a long-standing concern of all island states. This incentive was accentuated by Australia's implicit assurance that the United States would support the treaty—a significant diplomatic development that would have added to international pressure on France to relocate its Pacific testing program. As Vanuatu's Father Walter Lini noted, Australia "quite confidently predicted [at the 1984 Tuvalu Forum meeting], that America would sign the treaty [protocols]" (ABC SBS 1989). In the absence of comprehensive denuclearization, the treaty continued to have relevance to island states as a modest move toward putting renewed pressure on France to end testing in the region.

The second incentive lay in new forms and levels of economic and military assistance offered by the ANZUS states when the treaty was initiated and negotiated. While not directly linked to the treaty in terms of their objectives, these new aid and assistance programs seemed to promote a positive climate for island responses to Australia's initiative. The most salient of these new forms of assistance was the Australian Pacific Patrol Boat initiative. This was taken advantage of by all the Melanesian Alliance states, as well as Fiji, Western Samoa, and the Cook Islands. With the exception of Australian assistance for PNG's recurrent government

expenditure, ANZUS economic and military assistance to island states continued to rise in the early and mid-1980s. Australian defense assistance to PNG, for example, rose from A\$14 million per year in 1975 to nearly A\$17 million per year in 1983 (ASSCFAD 1984, 104–105). Also, new aid, trade, and military cooperation relationships were established between the United States and a number of island countries, especially Fiji and PNG (Hamel-Green 1990, 86–98).

In Fiji, confirmation of the role of US economic incentives in the Fijian reversal of its previous ban on nuclear-ship visits was evident in statements made during Ratu Mara's visit to Washington in November 1984. During the visit, Ratu Mara sought increases in American military and economic aid, including the provision of US bilateral aid, arguing that Fiji was ready to play its part in regional security and that US development aid was part of the overall US responsibility to the region (*FT*, 29 Nov 1984). President Reagan thanked Fiji for weighing its opposition to nuclear weapons against the security needs of the region to give US naval ships access to Fiji ports, and US officials indicated that Fiji would receive a major boost in US aid (*ibid*).

This promise was quickly fulfilled: by 1986, US economic aid to Fiji increased to approximately US\$1.5 million annually, a threefold increase over the 1980 level. Charles Greenleaf, US assistant administrator in the Bureau for Asia and the Near East, noted that "our program delivers on the President's commitment to Prime Minister Ratu Mara in November 1984 and is intended to maintain Fiji's role as a moderate and influential pro-US force in the South Pacific" (USASC 1986, 568). In addition to increased economic aid, the United States substantially increased its military cooperation with Fiji, including providing training programs for Fijian military personnel and funding assistance for equipping the Fijian army with a new standard rifle, the US M16A2 (Herr 1984, 186–187; Alves 1985, 3–4; Sutherland 1988, 41).

Along with these incentives to island support for the treaty were negative constraints affecting the freedom of island states to pursue more comprehensive NFZ arrangements. First, at the economic level, the heavy dependence of the island states on ANZUS aid, trade, and military assistance, particularly from Australia and New Zealand, meant that the island states would have been subject to possible reductions in anticipated economic assistance or even to economic sanctions. US withdrawal from military cooperation arrangements with New Zealand, coupled with open

discussion of economic sanctions against New Zealand by US Congressional representatives, would have been interpreted by many island governments as an indication of what they, too, could face if they were to pursue comprehensive NFZ arrangements.

Second, at the political level, island states were likely constrained by a perceived threat of political destabilization. As already noted, Namaliu regarded the threat of destabilization arising from great-power rivalry as a moderately likely threat. The hypothesized role of the United States in the first Fiji coup is one possible example. Another is Belau, where the United States is believed to have colluded in campaigns aimed at intimidating supporters of Belau's nuclear-free constitution (Firth 1987, 57–64; Greco 1987, 22–25). These examples suggest that island perceptions of possible destabilization instigated directly or indirectly by a superpower constrained the Forum island states from pursuing more comprehensive denuclearization.

CONCLUSION: REGIONAL CONSEQUENCES AND IMPLICATIONS

In the relatively brief period since the 1985 signing of the SPNFZ Treaty, any conclusions concerning the regional consequences and implications must necessarily be very tentative. In the short term, it may have achieved its immediate objective of protecting major developments in American strategic utilization of the region, particularly the new deployment of long-range cruise missiles and the upgrading of C3I installations for new strategic missions (nuclear-war fighting, SDI), against the possibility of a more comprehensive regional denuclearization. In achieving this objective, the Australian government successfully asserted its traditional ascendancy over regional security policy, in part through a negotiating strategy that held out the prospect of US support for the measure and in part through the push-pull inducements inherent in the island states' economic dependence on the ANZUS states.

The regional threat to US and ANZUS nuclear interests posed by New Zealand Labour's antinuclear stance, while an important element of the regional pressure for denuclearization that prompted Australia's preemptive SPNFZ initiative, was successfully contained by the treaty. The New Zealand Labour government was reluctant to risk additional US or Australian sanctions by encouraging the "export" of its "nuclear allergy" to the remainder of the region and therefore did not support island states' efforts to secure more comprehensive denuclearization during treaty nego-

tiations. In the short term, at least, the Rarotonga Treaty served to prevent the New Zealand "disease" from becoming a regional epidemic.

The treaty has so far not achieved its ostensible aims of ending French testing and protecting the region from nuclear attack. France has continued to declare its intention to test in the Pacific (*PIM*, June 1987, 12). On the other hand, the treaty has served as a means of applying diplomatic pressure on France through UN General Assembly resolutions calling on it to sign and ratify the treaty protocols. In the context of the eased East-West tensions in Europe and the prospect of further European arms control, both internal and external pressures on France to scale down its nuclear effort may yet lead to an end to the French nuclear test program in the Pacific.

The treaty's tolerance of the continued regional presence of US nuclear-weapon systems likely to attract targeting suggests that superpower nuclear competition and the risk of nuclear attack have by no means been eliminated. The zone has not removed any of the principal risk factors likely to attract or provoke nuclear attack.

If the Australian government was successful in its goal of protecting US and ANZUS nuclear and strategic objectives in the region, at least in the short term, this success was not without significant political costs. In the longer term, these costs could defeat the original aims of the exercise. The US decision against endorsing the treaty caused major resentment and bitterness throughout most of the island states against both the United States and Australia. Having agreed to treaty compromises to accommodate ANZUS nuclear concerns in the belief that the treaty would be backed by the United States and thereby add to international pressure against French testing, island states understandably felt betrayed by the ANZUS states, including New Zealand.

The United States was again seen (as in its 1983 decision not to sign the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and its failure to restrain its fishing fleet from illegal fishing in island waters) to be insensitive to even the most elementary regional aspirations for protection of South Pacific peoples' health, security, resources, and environment. Australia was seen either as manipulating island consent to an arrangement that did not effectively exclude superpower nuclear rivalry and activities in the region or as having less power than it purported in securing its powerful ally's recognition of regional interests.

Summarizing island states' perceptions of the US decision not to sign

the treaty protocols, PNG's Siaguru noted that island leaders were "abruptly dumped back to square one by the US's refusal to sign the protocols of the Treaty of Rarotonga," and "complained bitterly" of American inconsistency in negotiating the fishing agreement and then rejecting the Rarotonga protocols (*PIM*, May 1987, 15-18). A recent report on the South Pacific by the conservative American-based Pacific Forum organization similarly noted the "deep disappointment" and "resentment" in the region over the American decision on the protocols and island perceptions that the United States appeared to tilt toward France on nuclear and territorial issues using as an excuse its global interests (*PNGT*, 24-30 Sep 1987).

These negative island reactions to the US nonsignature of the protocols may well be dissipated by diplomatic initiatives and increases in American and Australian economic assistance to the region. On the other hand, the insensitive US response to the treaty could contribute to a reorientation in island states' relations with the ANZUS states. It may well reinforce the trend among some island states, especially the Melanesian states, to seek to reduce their economic and political dependence on the ANZUS states by diversifying their relations with other countries, including Third World countries, Japan, the European Economic Community, the Soviet Union, and China. Already, Kiribati and Vanuatu have entered into commercial fishing agreements with the Soviet Union, Nauru is considering a Soviet offer of assistance in rehabilitation of the island following exhaustion of phosphate deposits, and PNG has sought membership of the Association of South East Asian Nations. If the ANZUS states cannot be counted on to protect island interests, then regional states may turn to more responsive alignments.

The ANZUS stress on the Soviet military threat to the region, not necessarily shared by many island states, especially in Melanesia, grows daily less credible as East-West tensions subside and the Soviet Union implements significant military cutbacks in both Europe and the Pacific. According to Siaguru, when the United States withdrew its security guarantees from New Zealand as a result of the nuclear-ships ban, island states observed that

the Russians did not leap into the breach. New Zealand was not bombed. . . . The months passed and New Zealand still existed carefree enough outside the American umbrella without any devastating consequences for itself or the Region." (*PIM*, May 1987, 18)

Given this difference in perception of the salience of external and Soviet threats, in Siaguru's view,

unless the US can demonstrate that its policy in the South West Pacific is not simply residual to its global strategic concerns, then as the situation clarifies with time the appeal of some form of internationally sanctioned regional neutrality is going to grow. (*PIM*, May 1987, 18)

Continued US unwillingness to endorse the treaty may contribute to a lessening of Australian and American influence in the region and work against the ANZUS objective of preserving the pro-Western alignment of the region.

The Rarotonga Treaty and its Protocol 2 obligations meant that the Soviet Union and China did not need to make onerous strategic concessions. Their prompt signature and declaratory support for the SPNFZ concept have already helped improve their relations with island states. The treaty provided a unique opportunity for the Soviet Union, which has long lacked residential diplomatic missions in island states, to show its sensitivity to island nuclear concerns and contrast its regional and arms-control policies with those of its superpower rival. Soviet success in negotiating two fishing agreements with island states, Kiribati and Vanuatu, and support for the Rarotonga Treaty could be expected to further reduce former island hesitations in opening up diplomatic and commercial relations with the Soviet Union. PNG's recent agreement "in principle" to a Soviet request for an embassy in Port Moresby may well be symptomatic of a new Soviet credibility in the region arising in part from Soviet gestures of support for island states' arms-control aspirations—the first fruits of glasnost in the South Pacific (*Age*, 17 Feb 1989).

The regional backlash against the United States was so severe that both the American business-oriented Pacific Forum organization and the House of Representatives subsequently urged the administration to change its mind about signing the treaty (*PNGT*, 24–30 Sep 1987; *USSAPA* 1987).

These domestic US political pressures may well lead to American reconsideration of the costs and benefits of withholding ratification. American ratification of the Rarotonga Protocols would eliminate the present tension between Australia's pursuit of "enlightened ANZUS self-interest" at the regional level and the continuing American subordination of regional concerns to US global strategies and priorities.

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