

New Zealand and the South Pacific

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Our South Pacific policy is a most important part of our overall external relations, but it serves too a definite purpose in underpinning New Zealand's credentials in the larger world.

RUSSELL MARSHALL, SOUTH PACIFIC ROLE FOR NEW ZEALAND

The confetti of island nations flung across the vast seascape of the South Pacific in a sense came of age in the second half of the 1980s. Previously, the islands had been shielded from the harsh realities of international politics and the advertising slogan "Fiji—The Way the World Should Be" was applicable to the region generally. The region's innocence was lost in a series of events that introduced political assassination, kidnapping, hijacking, sabotage, gun-running, and coups. Peoples of the South Pacific could only rue the transition from the fantasy world of a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical to the grim realities of modern international life. The old slogans were no longer appropriate. Along with them went the old certainties. The era of tranquility had given way to an era of turbulence.

The Pacific Islands now engage the entire gamut of New Zealand's interests. As New Zealanders began to see themselves less as European settlers and more as Pacific inhabitants, a process that began with World War II and was intensified with Britain's entry to the European Economic Community, a closer identification with and involvement in their immediate region was inevitable. After all, New Caledonia is closer to New Zealand than is Australia. The troubles that hit the region hastened the process of refocusing New Zealand foreign policy on its immediate neighborhood and gave it added urgency. Where once only politicians with

exceptional peripheral vision might have been expected to look at the Pacific Islands, by the 1990s there was general recognition that the region provided New Zealand with a social and political context and could represent its future. Significantly, Don McKinnon, the minister of external relations and trade in the National government that came to power toward the end of 1990, made his first overseas trip to Fiji, Niue, and the Cook Islands in January 1991, accompanied by Defence Minister Warren Cooper.

Unsettling incidents in the Pacific Islands and a growing awareness of New Zealand's Pacific identity coincided with momentous changes in global international relations. It had become clear by the start of the 1990s that world politics would no longer rotate around the axis of superpower rivalry. Instead, the international agenda would be dominated by international concerns and regional conflicts, and the nature of those concerns would be transformed. Visions and minds have turned increasingly to grappling with issues of resource management, environmental protection, and the basics of health, shelter, food, and development rather than military security.

New Zealand has security, economic, political, and environmental interests in the South Pacific. These arise from geographical proximity, a shared maritime environment, cultural and historical links between the Polynesian populations of New Zealand and other Pacific Island states, missionary and educational contacts, and trade, investment, and migration flows. At its broadest, the goal of New Zealand's policy is to ensure that the Pacific Islands remain well disposed, friendly, stable, and prosperous, and that they do not suffer serious environmental degradation.

SECURITY ISSUES

If the Soviet Union needed a buffer of communist states, why should those buffer states not require a further ring of buffers of their own and so on until only New Zealand was left to be buffed against? (Kennet 1987, 209)

In the unlikely event of an invasion of New Zealand from the north, the Pacific Islands could be used as stepping-stones. New Zealand's security interests are therefore somewhat engaged in the island states immediately to the north and northeast. In addition, and in partnership with its Australian ally, New Zealand also has a strategic-cum-commercial interest in

securing the long and exposed sea and air lanes of communication across the Pacific vastness.

The most important security goal for New Zealand and Australia used to be the strategic denial of the Pacific Islands to the Soviet Union. That concern became increasingly attenuated during the 1980s and irrelevant with the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. Given the occasional hysteria induced by Soviet fishing activities in the Pacific, it is ironic that the earliest Soviet fishing agreements were with New Zealand. Both Australia and New Zealand had been disturbed by Soviet offers of assistance in 1976 to help Tonga and Western Samoa develop their fishing resources in return for shore facilities for Soviet fishing vessels. Toward the end of 1977, Soviet officials argued that if they could be granted access to New Zealand shore facilities they would not need to approach island governments for such privileges. New Zealand's keen desire to provide Soviet access to New Zealand fish resources and shore facilities was equally matched by its desire for access to the Soviet market for New Zealand meat. In 1978 an agreement was signed for New Zealand to provide shore facilities to Soviet vessels under strictly controlled conditions. The Soviet Union was given access to existing facilities for provisioning, repairs, and maintenance, and for the exchange of crews by air, on a commercial and nonreciprocal basis.

Perhaps the long-term significance of the New Zealand-Soviet fishing deal of the late 1970s can best be recognized with hindsight. First, it meant that the Soviet Union (and Eastern Europe) became an option in the New Zealand pursuit of market and product diversification made necessary by Britain's membership in the European Economic Community. The success of the strategy would lead to the creation of a commercial lobby in New Zealand with a vested interest in maintaining good relations with the Soviet Union. Second, it meant that for the first time New Zealand would have its own dealings with the Soviet Union and would no longer be reliant solely on the intelligence information and political assessments of its major allies as the basis of its policy toward the Soviet Union. The two strands together meant that New Zealand slowly but steadily developed stable working relationships with the Eastern bloc.

The ramifications were felt in New Zealand in the 1984 election. For example, Bob Jones, a property magnate and leader of what was then called the New Zealand Party, noted that the Soviet Union was a major trading partner, not an enemy. Why should the Soviets bother to invade

New Zealand, he asked, when they could already get as much as they wanted of New Zealand goods at subsidized prices? They realize, he insisted, that to obtain the same products after invading and occupying New Zealand, they would have to replace one of the most efficient systems of producing and distributing these commodities with one that had already been proven inefficient. They would simply be getting products of lesser quality at much higher cost.

While Bob Jones struck a responsive chord because of his economic logic, others argued that Soviet scaremongering lacked strategic logic as well. The Soviet Union was a formidable continental power in its homeland, but even if it had the intention, it lacked the means to project its vast power to the South Pacific. The sea assertion assets (maritime power and sealift and airlift capabilities) of the Western alliance were incomparably superior, and any Soviet maritime threat that might materialize would be contained and defeated long before it crossed the equator.¹ Similarly, the Soviet Union always lacked the ability to translate continental military power into intercontinental political and economic influence. Pacific Island leaders were not attracted to its political system, and its economic record acted as an effective repellent to other countries adopting Soviet-style methods. Nor were "objective" conditions and factors in the islands suited to the cause of advancing Marxism.

Perhaps because of the confluence of these factors, New Zealand was better prepared to be won over by the remarkable international diplomacy of Mikhail Gorbachev sooner than were America or Australia. Coincidentally, the first term of the Reagan administration in Washington alarmed many New Zealanders. President Ronald Reagan seemed to believe that a nuclear war with the evil empire was fightable, winnable, and desirable. Convinced of the malignancy of Reaganite America's intentions toward the Soviet Union, New Zealanders (along with many other allied publics) began to view America as the greater threat to world peace.

One important difference separated New Zealand from other allied countries. In recent times, the only plausible threat to New Zealand security has lain in the possibility of the breakdown of nuclear peace between the superpowers. It is extraordinarily difficult, even with the benefit of hindsight—or perhaps because of the benefit of hindsight—to identify genuine threats to New Zealand security over the past few decades. Consequently, the simultaneous perception of a bellicose America under Reagan and a peaceful Soviet Union under Gorbachev (prepared to undertake unilateral initiatives in an effort to avert nuclear disaster) had the net

effect of undermining the strategic basis of the ANZUS alliance for New Zealand.

With the threat from the Soviet Union disappearing along with that country,² what other sources of potential attack might be identified for New Zealand? The short answer is none. Those that might have the intention lack the means to project hostile power across such vast distances and cutting across the vital interests of many intervening powers. Conversely, if malignant intentions are inferred *from capabilities*, the only three countries capable of threatening New Zealand at present or in the foreseeable future are Australia, Japan, and the United States. Australia and New Zealand have long formed a security community. War between them in reality would be civil rather than international. Although civil wars are not unknown in international relations, not even the most fanatic nationalist in New Zealand would suggest that there is any possibility of relations between the two countries deteriorating to the point where hostilities could begin: sport is a very useful substitute.

It is a very long time since many New Zealanders regarded Japan as a potential threat, and this was the reason for the removal of yet another strategic plank of ANZUS. Whereas only a minority of New Zealanders view the United States with suspicion, their feelings can be intense enough to constitute genuine hostility. In the series of public opinion polls commissioned by the Corner committee, a surprising 14 percent of New Zealanders cited the United States as the most likely source of danger to New Zealand security, compared to 31 percent who cited the USSR (Corner 1986, 40).³ Nevertheless, this is not the opinion of the majority of New Zealanders, nor of officials, nor of the government.

All these benign perceptions of New Zealand's strategic environment came together in the 1987 Defence White Paper. New Zealand, the White Paper asserted confidently, faced no prospect of invasion in the foreseeable future (NZDD 1987, 6). At a lower threshold, three types of security threats from the South Pacific can be identified. The most direct but least likely is outright attack or invasion of a Pacific island by an external power. Such an eventuality would have particular cogency for New Zealand because of its special constitutional responsibilities for the defense of entities such as the Cook Islands, Tokelau, and Niue. But because of its low probability, it does not much exercise the minds of security planners in Wellington.

The second possibility is that a serious internal security threat or rebellion would break out in a Pacific island country. As well as posing a threat

to the security of the island state, such a development could also endanger the lives of New Zealand nationals. This presumably is one of the contingencies for which the Ready Reaction Force trains. During the confused situation in Fiji after the coup of May 1987, Prime Minister David Lange made it clear that if New Zealanders were in danger, then New Zealand troops would intervene, with or without the permission of the governor-general of Fiji. (In 1992 the New Zealand press broke the story of a serious difference of opinion between Prime Minister David Lange and the New Zealand defense forces on the advisability of a commando raid to rescue an Air New Zealand plane that had been hijacked to Nadi, Fiji, on 19 May 1987. The military leaned toward greater caution than the prime minister [S. Evans 1992*a*; 1992*b*; 1992*c*]). As was the case in Fiji at the time, it is inconceivable that any future situation that posed a threat to the lives of New Zealand nationals would not pose an equal danger to Australian nationals. Therefore, any response would almost certainly be a joint Australian–New Zealand response. Again, I would be surprised to learn that the two countries' forces were not prepared and trained for such emergencies. (But then I was surprised at how ill prepared the two countries were for a coup in Fiji: I thought that was an entirely predictable development, although the timing and author could not have been identified in advance.)

The final Pacific-based threat scenario is that of long-term instability resulting from a persistent economic, tribal, geographical, or racial divide. One potential for this of course is in Fiji. Or rather, two potentials: between Fiji-Indians and Fijians; and between Fijians themselves from different regions or confederacies. In 1992 a more likely location for such a threat seemed to be Bougainville (see Wesley-Smith 1992).

New Zealand neither has nor has sought a regional defense pact or security arrangement to underpin the premier political institutions of the South Pacific. But New Zealand does talk about and engage in a certain amount of consultation and cooperation on defense and security matters affecting the region. The programs of security assistance to Pacific Islands and maritime and aerial patrol and surveillance are all designed to preclude threats from materializing, and, should they show signs of developing, to provide early warning of their gathering menace in the incipient stages. It is a safe bet that should policymakers perceive a deterioration in the regional security environment, programs of regional defense cooperation would intensify.

There has been a shift in security focus since the change of government in New Zealand in 1990. Interestingly, the National government's 1991 White Paper on defense did not dispute the previous government's assertion in the 1987 White Paper that New Zealand faces no direct threat to its security. Few outside powers possess the logistical and combat capabilities to be able to mount an invasion of New Zealand across vast distances. Consequently, "the threat of invasion . . . is not the main determinant of a New Zealand defence strategy" (NZDD 1991, 48). Defining the South Pacific as New Zealand's geographic area of operations has the advantage of concentrating the capabilities and training needed by the defense forces. Even in the South Pacific, however, internal threats will be more potent than external ones.

Where the previous government took comfort from geographical isolation, the present government argues that a scattering of security interests over considerable distances means that New Zealand must have a wide defense focus. Geographical remoteness keeps threats at a distance, and also complicates defense planning for long and exposed lines of communication to trading, political, and cultural partners. According to Prime Minister Jim Bolger, the Labour government had taken New Zealand too far in the direction of an inward-looking isolationism and regionalism. Such an outlook is unsustainable, in the view of the Bolger government, because the country's interests are global, shared, and capable of advancement only in cooperation with others. Playing its proper part in alliances, far from subordinating them, promotes New Zealand interests. Consequently, the government has decided to return New Zealand to an internationalist posture (NZDD 1991, 5). Asked about the impact of New Zealand's antinuclear law and policy in the South Pacific, Foreign Minister Don McKinnon said that it was considered unhelpful by the Cook Islands, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and Western Samoa, and viewed antagonistically by Tonga. According to him, a functioning ANZUS alliance would enable New Zealand to interact more authoritatively with the Pacific Islands (McKinnon 1992).

ECONOMIC FACTORS

Security considerations suggest that New Zealand—whose trade is almost totally sea-borne: 99 percent by volume and 90 percent by value (NZDD 1991, 22)—will continue to strive to maintain the Pacific Islands as a

buffer against potential threats to its sea lanes. New Zealand therefore has a vested security interest in the continued viability of the Pacific Island states. As the 1980s progressed, there was a noticeable tendency among policymakers in Wellington to keep broadening their conception of security in the South Pacific, embracing economic, political, and environmental dimensions as well as military ones (see Graham 1992, Marshall 1988).

Attempts by New Zealand to claim shared community with the Pacific Islands face one difficult obstacle. The Western model of economic production in New Zealand distinguishes it too sharply from the subsistence economies of the Pacific Islands. Most Forum island countries have narrowly based economies and consequently are overly dependent on remittances, foreign aid, and budget support grants for the maintenance and viability of even minimal levels of government services and infrastructural support. While their economies have been static or have even declined, aid dependency has increased, although levels of external assistance have not risen (Figure 1). Donor countries also have been hit by resource constraints and heightened competition for scarcer funds. Demands for aid from Eastern Europe and the former USSR in particular have been competing for higher priority than demands from countries in remoter corners of the world. The end of the Cold War has also removed an important leverage used to good effect in the past by island governments that sought external assistance from competing blocs. This only serves to increase the importance of new sources of foreign aid.

New Zealand's total official development assistance was NZ\$141.8 million in 1988–89, NZ\$148.7 million in 1990–91, and NZ\$146.5 million in 1991–92. The 1991–92 figure is equivalent to about 0.21 percent of gross domestic product, one of the lowest proportions among aid donors. Don McKinnon, who is both foreign minister and Pacific Island affairs minister, argues that the proportion of aid must not be allowed to fall below 0.20 percent of gross domestic product—a far more modest goal than the parliamentary select committee's target of 0.36 percent, let alone the long-established United Nations target of 0.7 percent (McKinnon 1992). Some argue that the volume of aid given is less important than its quality, and that the more salient questions for New Zealand are the feasibility of projects, the efficacy of aid, and the absorptive capacity of recipients. McKinnon, for example, speaks with pride of a beekeeping project in Papua New Guinea set up with the help of New Zealand hives and expertise. The project is now self-sustaining and has provided a base of eco-

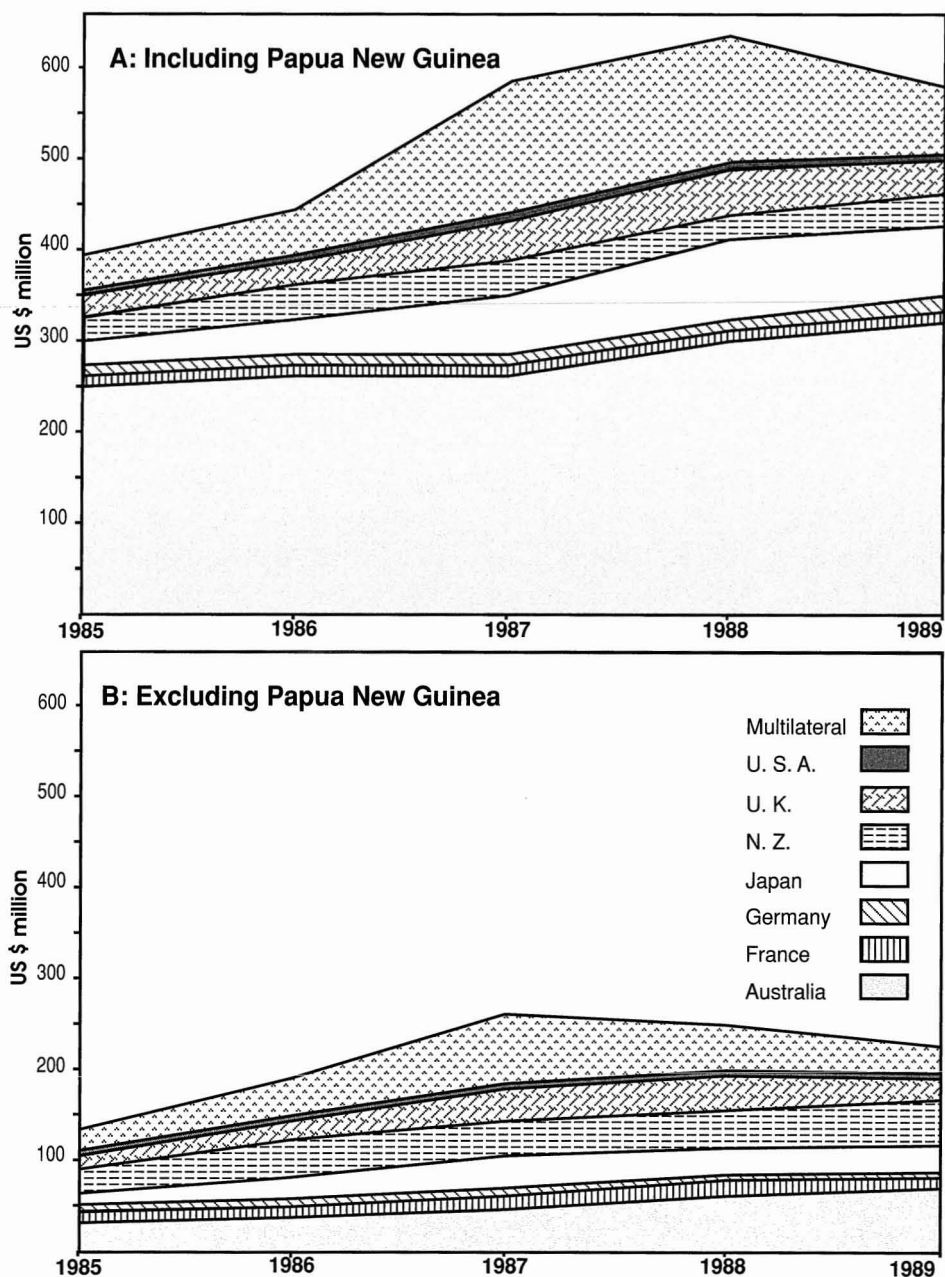


FIGURE 1. Major aid donors to Forum Island Countries, 1984–1989. (Current US\$ millions). Multilateral donors include the World Bank, the European Community, the Asian Development Bank, and the United Nations Development Plan. *Source:* OECD data provided by New Zealand Ministry of External Relations and Trade, 1992.

conomic activities to the target area (McKinnon 1992). On the other hand, he has also acknowledged that the retreat into the "quality is better than quantity" argument could be a debating point to deflect criticism of the small amount of New Zealand aid. To some extent too the government has tried to offset declining New Zealand aid by helping the South Pacific tap into multilateral assistance programs for funding such activities as the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme. In 1991-92, New Zealand's bilateral aid amounted to 85 percent of its total official development assistance. In turn, about 70 percent of New Zealand's bilateral aid was allocated to the Pacific Islands, including development projects, budgetary support, and study and training awards (Figure 2a). Within the South Pacific, for reasons of historical association or continuing special constitutional links, there is clearly a Polynesian focus to New Zealand aid (Figure 1b). As for regional programs, New Zealand is the second-largest donor to the Forum Secretariat, providing 37 percent of its core budget (NZMERT 1991b, 21). The other major items of expenditure in New Zealand's aid to the region are on the South Pacific Commission (NZ\$2.1 million in 1991-92), the University of the South Pacific (NZ\$2.6 million), and Pacific third country training (NZ\$3 million). The details of the Pacific Island students who were awarded New Zealand scholarships during 1983 to 1989 are given in Table 1.⁴

New Zealand remains one of the major aid donors to the region as a whole (Figure 1), and its aid is especially important to a select few Polynesian recipients. If all South Pacific Commission members are included among the recipients, the ranking of the major bilateral aid donors is France, Australia, United States, Japan, New Zealand, United Kingdom (Parliament of Australia 1989, 77). But 98 percent of the French and US aid to the Pacific Islands is given to their dependent territories in the region. If only the thirteen island members of the South Pacific Forum are included, then the aid donor rankings for the past five years are Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom in the top four, with France, Germany, and the United States some distance behind (NZMERT 1992). In the past decade, New Zealand has faced two constraints on the size of its aid programs relative to the other major aid donors to the Pacific Islands. First, its economy has been in a prolonged recession, forcing severe budget cuts in every area of government spending. Second, the New Zealand dollar has declined steadily and substantially over the decade, thereby depressing the value of New Zealand's aid relative to that from other donors.

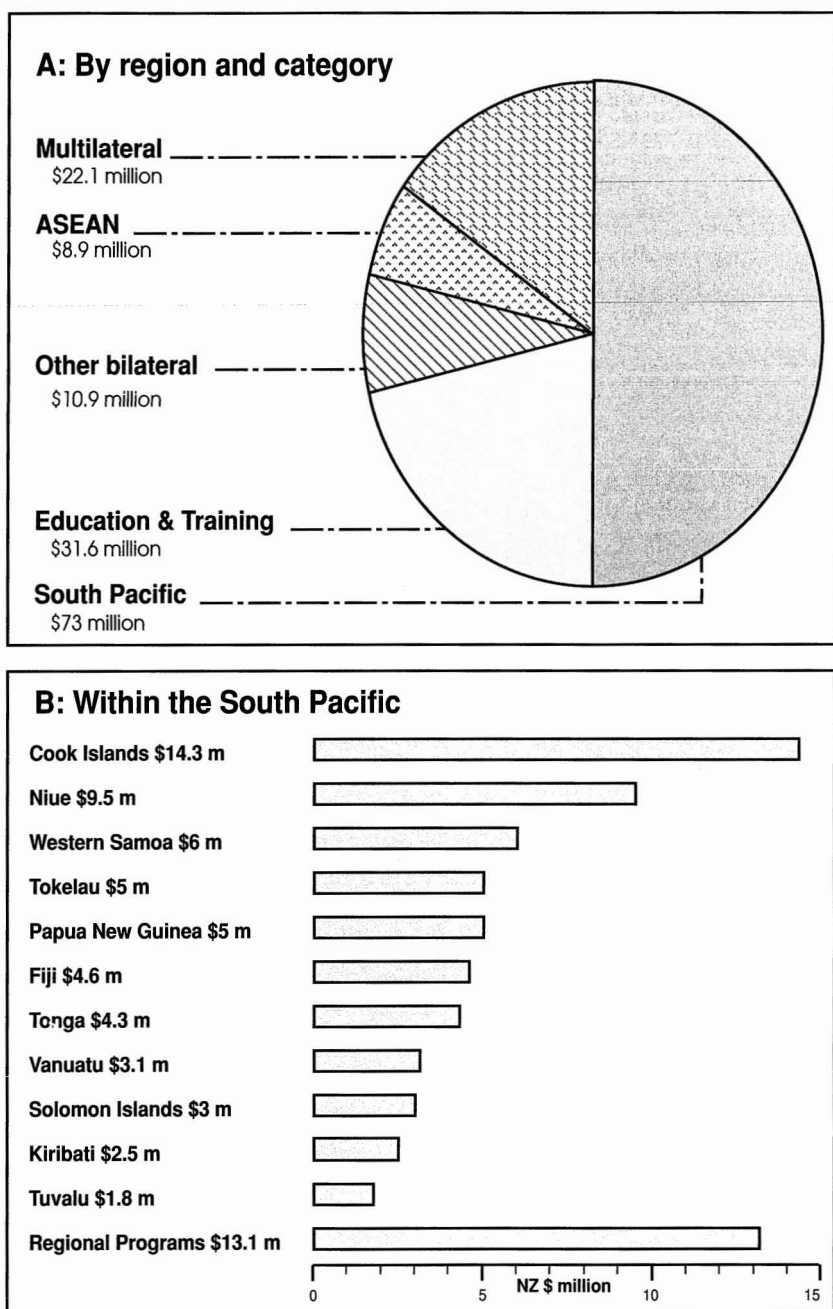


FIGURE 2. New Zealand overseas development aid recipients, 1991-92. (NZ\$ millions). *Source:* From data provided by New Zealand Ministry of External Relations and Trade, 1992.

Table 1. Official Development Assistance Students in New Zealand from Forum Island Countries, 1983-1989

Country	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Cook Islands	58	35	44	54	35	43	45
Fiji	61	55	76	87	48	49	65
Kiribati	19	15	13	18	15	17	19
Marshall Islands	—	—	—	—	1	2	2
Micronesia	—	—	—	2	1	2	4
Niue	33	47	51	56	23	40	49
Papua New Guinea	21	15	18	18	19	16	27
Solomon Islands	23	30	29	39	21	34	37
Tonga	78	33	29	32	37	51	58
Tuvalu	15	6	11	19	19	21	27
Vanuatu	36	23	19	27	32	40	52
Western Samoa	191	91	97	112	66	92	112
TOTAL FORUM ISLAND COUNTRIES	535	350	387	464	317	407	497
TOTAL ALL COUNTRIES	767	591	602	706	570	739	851

Source: *New Zealand Hansard* 1990, 117-118.

Nor is aid an unmixed blessing: New Zealanders as well as some Pacific Islanders worry about aid dependency and about the absorptive capacity of recipients who may be the object of too much donor attention. (The South Pacific receives exceptionally high volumes of aid on a per capita basis.) Aid confers certain benefits on New Zealand as well, as noted by Foreign Minister McKinnon: more than 70 percent of New Zealand's bilateral aid to the region flows straight back for the purchase of goods and services in the donor country; the legacy of years of aid to the region includes a number of island leaders who are positively disposed toward the country in which they were educated; and the promotion of economic prosperity and social stability expands New Zealand's potential markets and assists in stabilizing its strategic environment (McKinnon 1992).

Moving from aid to trade, it is surprising that trade with the South Pacific accounts for less than 2 percent of total New Zealand trade. New Zealand is not all that important as a trading partner of the Forum island

countries (Naisali 1991). Australia, the European Community, Japan, and the newly industrializing countries of Asia are the really important trading partners of the Pacific Island states.

The vehicle for promoting regional trade with New Zealand (and Australia) is the South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement (SPARTECA), which provides nonreciprocal and unrestricted duty-free access for all island products exported to New Zealand. Since 1 July 1988 all Forum island countries' goods meeting the SPARTECA rules of origin requirements⁵ have been allowed entry into the New Zealand market free of duty and import licensing on a nonreciprocal basis. (Australian quotas on certain import items like textiles, clothing, and footwear are due to be lifted in 1996.) New Zealand also operates the Pacific Islands Industrial Development Scheme, whereby New Zealand companies are given financial assistance and incentives for the development of approved manufacturing operations in Pacific Island countries. The goal of the scheme is to foster economic development and to expand employment opportunities in the islands. For all this, a pronounced structural imbalance remains in the trade between New Zealand and the South Pacific, with exports to the islands almost four times more than imports.

POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The indefinite perpetuation of trade imbalances can generate resentment and sour political relations. By global standards, New Zealand is a modest power. By regional standards, however, it is a metropolitan power of considerable size, affluence, influence, and therefore importance. Consequently, New Zealand policy pronouncements and actions produce disproportionate effects in the South Pacific compared to elsewhere, and New Zealand's regional diplomacy has had to be qualitatively different from its general diplomacy. In particular, New Zealand has had to be attuned to regional aspirations and sensibilities. It has striven for this by means of regular and systematic visits by politicians and officials to the islands to listen and learn. For example, New Zealand is the only country that sends officials annually to each island capital for bilateral exchanges on political and security issues.

The number of diplomatic posts maintained by New Zealand is the best illustration of the political importance to it of the Pacific Islands, for three reasons. First, given the salience of the Pacific Island countries in world

Table 2. The Regional Distribution of New Zealand's Diplomatic Posts
(as of September 1991)

Region	Posts*		Personnel†	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
The Americas	7	15	38	13
Australia	4	9	31	11
Europe (including Russia)	10	21	71	24
Asia	10	21	77	26
Africa, Middle East, United Nations	6	13	32	11
<i>Pacific Islands</i>	10	21	44	15
TOTAL	47	100	293	100

Source: Data in NZMERT 1991a.

* Include all embassy, consular, trade, and tourism posts.

† Includes diplomatic, defense, immigration, trade, and tourism officials at all levels, from typist to ambassador.

affairs, and that of some other regions, it is an extraordinary statistic that New Zealand has the same number of posts in the Pacific Islands as in all of Asia (including ASEAN) and all of Europe (including the United Kingdom, Eastern Europe, and Russia) (Table 2). Although consideration of the number of personnel staffing overseas posts reduces the salience of the islands, the number and proportion of New Zealand government representatives posted to the Pacific Islands is still very impressive. Second, the diplomatic concentration on the Pacific Islands belies the belief, fostered by Sir Robert Muldoon, that New Zealand's foreign policy is trade, insofar as the Pacific Islands are not a major trading partner of New Zealand. Third, the extensive diplomatic network in the South Pacific has been maintained, and in some cases even expanded, during a period of considerable resource constraints and financial stringency for New Zealand departments, including the foreign service bureaucracy.

The expanded New Zealand diplomatic presence in the Pacific Islands

is an objective measure of the assertion that official and political interest in the region has increased commensurate with its perceived greater salience in Wellington. The large number of posts scattered throughout the Pacific facilitate more frequent visits to the region by officials and politicians, the cultivation of personal relationships with island leaders, and the maintenance of a closer watching brief over the region generally. New Zealand's South Pacific diplomacy in the 1990s is based on recognizing the diversity that exists in the region, on a multidimensional conception of security, on regionalism, and on a responsive rather than a coercive approach to the challenges confronting the islands and appropriate responses to them.

A parallel approach by Australia was labeled "constructive commitment" in a noteworthy address to the Foreign Correspondents' Association in Sydney by Foreign Minister Gareth Evans on 23 September 1988 (Evans 1988). For New Zealand, as for Australia, the goals are to underwrite regional economic viability, political stability, and national security; to foster a strong sense of regional community; to promote shared interests and problem-solving instrumentalities; and to make their worldwide diplomatic facilities available for the representation of regional and island interests. Australia has the advantage over New Zealand of greater resources. New Zealand has the advantage that, not being the largest regional actor—Australia is the region's largest economic partner, its biggest bilateral aid donor, and its most "tangible" military power—it does not attract the same degree of suspicion or accusations of acting in a patronizing manner. Island leaders tend to resent having their interests "interpreted" to outsiders by the regional metropolitan powers. Speaking at the Otago Foreign Policy School in 1990, Margaret Taylor, the Papua New Guinea ambassador to the United States, thanked New Zealand for cooperative diplomacy while decrying the Australian tendency to "interpret" in such forums as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Taylor 1991, 201). Australia also provoked resentment in Kiribati over its fishing deal with the Soviet Union, in Vanuatu over allegations of Libyan involvement, and in Papua New Guinea because of statements about the crisis in Bougainville.

This is not to imply that New Zealand has drawn no criticism for a patronizing attitude, for example for its reactions to the coups in Fiji. The National government has tried to keep New Zealand's relationship with Fiji correct, perhaps even reasonably warm. Conceivably, should an

elected government take over the reins in Fiji after the elections scheduled for mid-1992, then New Zealand—which is worried about the deteriorating standards of discipline in the Fiji army—will reconsider restoring defense relations with Fiji.

Although in a security sense New Zealand traditionally pursued a policy of strategic denial vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, in a political sense New Zealand has traditionally attempted to sensitize Washington to regional concerns and needs. One of the most durable areas of difference between the United States and the Forum island countries was the question of licensed tuna fishing. Eventually Washington showed itself attentive to expressions of unhappiness by regional leaders and of disquiet by Australia and New Zealand. Corrective action took the form of a multilateral fisheries treaty in April 1987. The treaty removed a major irritant from Pacific Islands–United States relations. Denial of the right of island governments to license tuna fishing had simply compounded their economic distress, generated bitterness and resentment toward the United States, eroded US influence, and undermined US efforts to deny a Pacific presence to the Soviet Union. By contrast, negotiation of the fisheries treaty demonstrated long-overdue policy sensitivity toward island concerns. The treaty is due to expire on 15 June 1993; its renegotiation and ratification has already been urged by the State Department in a formal report to Congress in 1990 (USDS 1990, 7).

On 19 April 1991, the legislature of the State of Hawai'i adopted a resolution requesting the United States and France to accept the Treaty of Rarotonga. The explanation for the state's interest was that Hawai'i, sharing the Pacific waters and populated by many residents of Pacific ethnicity and cultural heritage, identifies with the concerns and grievances related to nuclear testing in the Pacific.

While Pacific Islanders are happy to see New Zealand preach the virtues of the Pacific Way to Washington, they do not appreciate sermons from Wellington on the virtues of constitutional democracy. The coups in Fiji highlighted a phenomenon that is relevant to the Pacific generally, namely the stress on inherited political structures engendered by imported institutions. Allied is the assertion of indigenous rights. But who are the indigenes, and what rights can they be said to possess as indigenes? In its coverage of regional affairs, will the New Zealand press always strike the right balance between legitimate reporting and culturally insensitive intrusions? Does New Zealand have sufficient faith in the constitutive princi-

ples and core values of its own political system to urge it on Pacific Islanders? These are questions that trouble New Zealanders as well as divide them from their fellow inhabitants of the Pacific (Mulgan 1991; Wilde 1991). By bringing many of these questions to a head, the crisis in Fiji in 1987 posed the most complex challenge ever to New Zealand foreign policy in the South Pacific.

A conception and organization of the political order that is deeply rooted in European civilization could prove an obstacle to New Zealand identifying itself more and more as a Pacific nation. Yet fundamentally it is in and of the Pacific. "New Zealand is part of the South Pacific," declared a Labour cabinet minister in Dunedin in May 1990 (Wilde 1991, 35). A National cabinet minister repeated the theme in Christchurch in January 1992: "New Zealanders have come to think of themselves as a South Pacific country" (Graham 1992, 2). As the New Zealand author Witi Ihimaera has remarked, the Maori dimension of New Zealand society gives it a natural and long lineage with Pacific peoples (Ihimaera 1991). Most New Zealanders would claim Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* as part of their cultural heritage, but no English person could do this.

Nor could an Australian. Because of the discrepancy in size, resources, and power between Australia and all other members of the South Pacific Forum, and equally because of its cross-regional links with Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean, Australia has a larger and longer train of interests. Even while playing a macromanagement role in the South Pacific, Australia tends to stand apart from the region in a manner that New Zealand policymakers believe is not possible for them. Australia and New Zealand therefore have parallel but by no means identical interests and roles in the region. Complementary approaches produce policy coordination and convergence. Australia and New Zealand cannot sustain their South Pacific policies without taking close account of each other's interests and policies.

Opposition to the program of nuclear testing by France has been one area of cooperation between Australia and New Zealand over the years. The testing has not really posed a security threat as such; rather, its damage has been political. The regional position, fully subscribed to by New Zealand, is simple: If the tests are harmful, they should be ended; if they cause no harm, they should be conducted on metropolitan French soil. The strategic justification for French nuclear testing in the Pacific is questionable. There was a time-lag of nine years between the first atmospheric and underground tests at Moruroa in 1966 and 1975 respectively. The site

was originally chosen because its isolation purportedly made it particularly suitable for atmospheric tests. The infrastructure built up after 1966 made Moruroa a convenient but not an essential site for underground testing. Even the strategic justification for the program of nuclear testing is dubious. The case for a comprehensive test ban has not been disproven even worldwide; for France, sufficiency rather than overambitious parity seems adequate to its posture of deterrence. Sufficiency is quite compatible with maintenance of the existing sophistication of nuclear weaponry and the cessation of further testing. The ending of the Cold War, the dismantling of the Warsaw Pact, the faltering transition to independent democracies by Eastern European countries, and the reunification of Germany give added poignancy to this criticism of French nuclear testing in the Pacific. (The unexpected and dramatic announcement on 9 April 1992 by new Prime Minister Pierre Bérégovoy that France would suspend nuclear testing for one year was warmly received in New Zealand and throughout the region, although the welcome was qualified with the hope that the temporary suspension would become a permanent cessation.)

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Political and economic considerations underline possible safety and environmental apprehensions, as well as harmful social and cultural consequences in the region. The more New Zealand defines its identity in regional terms, the more it becomes involved in efforts to control environmental damage in the South Pacific. One reason why France has been dismissive of regional protests has been a lack of proven environmental damage, as authenticated by the occasional scientific investigation. The work and findings of a team of scientists from Australia, New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea that traveled to Tahiti and Moruroa Atoll in October 1983, headed by New Zealand National Radiation Laboratory Director Hugh Atkinson, was not free of flaws. The Atkinson mission lacked medically qualified staff, was barred from an independent choice of sampling sites on Moruroa, and was not permitted to collect sediment from the lagoon. The 1984 South Pacific Forum communiqué noted that although the mission's findings "allayed to some degree the concern that had been expressed about the short-term effects of the French nuclear tests, they provided no reassurance about long-term consequences nor in any sense diminished Forum opposition to testing in any environment" (*NZFAR* 1984,

37). There remains a need for an independent team of scientists to investigate the health and environmental effects of French nuclear testing in the region, for them to have unrestricted freedom of investigation from French and Tahitian authorities, and for the World Health Organization to receive complete statistics on rates and causes of mortality.

Nuclear hazards are but one element in the broader environmental equation. An attempt to develop a regional approach to environmental issues, the South Pacific Regional Environmental Program (SPREP) was formally launched in 1980. Its major achievements include the Action Plan for Managing the Natural Resources and Environment (SPREP Action Plan, 1983), and the Convention for the Protection of Natural Resources and Environment (SPREP Convention, 1986). Its ongoing program covers such areas as watershed management; quality control of island and coastal waters; management of natural resources, wastes, and pollution; and protection of historic sites.

Indications that the Japanese intended to dump low-level radioactive waste in the northern Pacific in the 1970s, and again in 1982, sensitized the peoples of the Pacific to the issue of toxic waste disposal. The 1985 South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (SPNFZ, or Treaty of Rarotonga) prohibited the dumping of any nuclear waste in the region (Article 7) and called for parties to support the conclusion of a global convention on the matter. The SPREP Convention was adopted in Noumea on 25 November 1986 after four years of negotiations. Its area comprises the exclusive economic zones of all Pacific Island countries and territories, as well as areas of the high seas that those zones enclose on all sides (see map, p 11—Ed).

The convention is concerned with the protection of the marine environment against pollution from land-based sources and seabed activities. It includes two protocols dealing with the dumping at sea of toxic and hazardous wastes, and the testing of nuclear explosive devices. The prohibition on dumping of radioactive wastes applies irrespective of whether or not such dumping causes pollution. The convention obliges the parties to prevent, reduce, and control pollution from any source; sets up a blacklist of substances that cannot be put into the ocean under any circumstances, such as mercury, oil, and certain plastics; and requires special permission for dumping some other substances, such as arsenic, lead, and nickel. Although nuclear testing is not prohibited, the parties are committed to sound environmental management in regard to the consequences of nuclear testing. The prohibition on future dumping constituted a signifi-

cant concession by France and the United States, both of which did sign the convention on 25 November. SPREP thus constitutes a significant international agency for the protection of the marine environment of the region.

New Zealand has supported SPREP materially and politically since its inception. At New Zealand initiative, the 1990 South Pacific Forum meeting in Vanuatu set up a subcommittee of officials to draw up a blueprint for the development of SPREP, in recognition of the need to develop its capacity and autonomy if it were to meet the growing environmental needs of the region and attract international environmental funding and coordinate the large numbers of environmental aid donors, nongovernmental organizations, agencies, and projects active in the region. The subcommittee was funded by New Zealand, met in Nadi, Fiji, shortly after the July 1990 Forum meeting and produced a report for Forum leaders that guided discussion at the SPREP intergovernmental meeting in Noumea from 24 to 28 September 1990. The broad regional consensus of the meeting was that SPREP should be set up as a fully autonomous regional organization with the mandate and capacity to mobilize, manage, and coordinate environmental protection in the South Pacific. The 1991 Forum communiqué welcomed the strengthening of SPREP by its establishment as a fully autonomous regional organization headquartered in Western Samoa (paragraph 12), and the entry into force of the SPREP Convention (paragraph 13).

The New Zealand government gave diplomatic support and the New Zealand people gave emotional support to the campaign to eradicate the practice of driftnet (wall of death) fishing in the Pacific Ocean. The driftnet fishing issue is regarded as a textbook case of regional cooperation. Within two years of launch, the campaign resulted in Resolution 44/225 of the United Nations General Assembly, in which member states agreed to phase out driftnetting in the South Pacific by 1 July 1991 and in other oceans by mid-1992. The importance of a united regional approach was underlined when Japan, which had tried to substitute a much weaker resolution in the General Assembly, announced cessation of driftnet fishing in the South Pacific a year ahead of the UN deadline.

The campaign to bring an end to driftnet fishing in Pacific waters offers another example of the close regional collaboration between Australia and New Zealand (as well as the United States—a point not lost on the Japanese). In February 1990, the two countries decided to investigate the

possibility of joint surveillance flights over the region aimed at spotting driftnetting. The joint flights by the Royal Australian Air Force and the Royal New Zealand Air Force began in November 1990—the start of the driftnet season. Through the flights, Prime Minister Bob Hawke explained in a statement on 2 November, the Forum Fisheries Agency would be provided with important data on the frequency and range of driftnetting activities in regional waters (Hawke 1990, 813).

One of the major arguments against driftnetting was its threat to the ecological balance: it violated the code of sustainable exploitation of marine resources. The search for sustainable development (development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations) poses a particular dilemma for the poorer countries. The Pacific Island countries bear little responsibility for causing such global environmental problems as climate change, ozone depletion, and toxic waste disposal—subsistence societies traditionally practice quite sound environmental management of their resources. Yet the islands are asked to assume some responsibility for the management of these problems in order to ameliorate their worst effects.

Climate change is probably the most disturbing of these problems in the South Pacific because of the potentially devastating scale of its impact. Island countries are not guilty of significant greenhouse emissions, but could suffer severely from their effects. Soil erosion, increased frequency and intensity of cyclones, destruction of land resources, and—the worst nightmare—the total inundation of some atolls by rising sea levels are all possible (Ferguson 1991). In other areas, for example, deforestation, Pacific Islanders might be said to bear some responsibility for ecological degradation. Island countries depend on agricultural, forest, and marine resources that in some cases are being pushed beyond the point of sustainability by the pressures of rising populations and the needs of a cash economy.

New Zealand will inevitably be involved in efforts to monitor the situation, to engage in scientific studies, to assign probabilities to various disaster scenarios, and to collaborate in regional and international efforts to contain the most damaging impacts in the South Pacific of activities outside it. New Zealand also has specific projects for the improvement of national environmental planning and management in Pacific Island countries. Major constraints in tackling environmental threats include inadequate policy guidelines, poor interagency coordination, and insufficient

staff training and experience, as well as scarce resources. For this reason human resources development accounts for a substantial proportion of New Zealand's bilateral aid to the region. New Zealand tries to ensure that its aid is well designed and environmentally sensitive, for example, support for forestry development projects in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Western Samoa.

CONCLUSION

Increasingly complex and diverse international relations in the South Pacific are an emerging reality. Decolonization in the region began in the early 1960s and was virtually completed in the 1980s. One major remaining exception is New Caledonia. On this issue, New Zealand has worked alongside island governments in the effort to transform New Caledonia into an independent Pacific neighbor. Foreign Minister McKinnon claims to have gone out of his way to develop the relationship with France in the South Pacific partly in order to ease New Caledonia's transition to independence (McKinnon 1992).

The period of decolonization also saw the transformation of the premier regional institutions. From being instruments of colonial control, they—or their replacements—became vehicles for the promotion of regional welfare as defined by Pacific Island peoples themselves. During the 1980s, Pacific Islanders reevaluated their attitudes toward extraregional powers whose policies and activities impinge on regional politics. Countries of the region are no longer content to be pawns in a great game being played out by others. They have their own priorities and are prepared to evaluate outsiders' actions on the basis of their responsiveness to regional aspirations. The ebbing of the Cold War means that Western policymakers must turn their attention away from strategic denial of the region to adversaries and concentrate on the maintenance of their own access. The Bolger government of New Zealand has pursued an easy and relaxed relationship. For example, the foreign minister has met almost all island leaders and is accessible to them by telephone (McKinnon 1992).

One consequence of these changes in the way the regional nations view the outside world has been that the established major actors in regional affairs in turn have been forced to redefine interests and reassess priorities. Some previously major actors have experienced declining influence in the region. Britain, for example, has more or less faded from the South Seas.

Others whose profiles were barely visible just a few decades ago, particularly countries of East and Northeast Asia such as Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan, have become more salient.

For New Zealand, the South Pacific has undergone a dramatic upgrading in priority. The fourth Labour government (1984–1990) turned around from viewing the South Pacific as its backyard to viewing it as its front yard. As with houses, so with New Zealand foreign policy: the most immediate, visible, and distinctive impressions will be those of its dealings in the region. Foreign Minister McKinnon prefers to think of the South Pacific not as New Zealand's backyard but as its home region (McKinnon 1992). It is a region of the highest foreign policy significance for New Zealand because of fundamental, long-standing, and largely unchanging interests. New Zealand is an important destination for many Pacific Island students and migrants. In a speech to Wellington Rotarians on 18 May 1989, Foreign Minister Russell Marshall pointed out that of the thirteen Forum island country leaders at the time, no fewer than eight had studied or spent important periods of their earlier lives in New Zealand.

Such experiences foster a sense of intimacy within the Pacific family of nations. A good example of New Zealanders' affection for and affinity with the Pacific Islands came in the wake of the tropical cyclone that devastated Western Samoa in December 1991. A telethon appeal raised NZ\$1 million, matched equally by the government. In addition, unemployed New Zealanders were flown to Western Samoa to help with repair and reconstruction work at public expense and without interruption to their unemployment benefits. The frequency of disasters in the Pacific Islands has led the government to increase the budgeted allocation for relief operations from NZ\$0.65 million in 1990–91 to NZ\$3 million in 1991–92 (NZMERT 1992).

Furthermore, the definition of the appropriate role for New Zealand in the South Pacific is affected by regional expectations of New Zealand. Certainly New Zealand is looked to for help and assistance in hurricane relief, civic action, search and rescue, fisheries, organizing international opposition to French nuclear testing, communicating regional anger over predatory fishing practices by distant-water fishing nations, and the like. An underlying assumption in the Pacific Islands is that New Zealand, along with some other countries, has a special responsibility to help preserve the islands' well-being and security within the region economically as well as politically, and to take a leading role in articulating regional

concerns in all appropriate international forums. In fulfillment of such expectations, New Zealand has not hesitated in the past to communicate grievances on tuna poaching to Washington and on nuclear testing to Paris.

The trust in which New Zealand is held in the islands was useful in 1990, when a New Zealand frigate was provided as a venue for talks between representatives of the Papua New Guinea government and leaders of the rebel movement in Bougainville. The New Zealand role was one of facilitator: not imposing settlements, but supporting the parties themselves in efforts to deal with a complex mix of nationalist, land tenure, religious, tribal, and economic issues (Nottage 1991).

For all this, New Zealand remains in constant danger of becoming a bit player in the South Pacific, as is illustrated by a small but symptomatic action in relation to radio broadcasts. The 1986 Royal Commission on Broadcasting identified the 7.5 kw transmitter used by Radio New Zealand's international service as the second smallest shortwave service in the world: only Uruguay's 5 kw station was smaller. In 1989 the transmitter was replaced by a 100 kw transmitter, which is not very powerful by international standards, with other countries spending millions of dollars on capital and operating costs of 250–500 kw stations. The new more powerful station was intended to provide listeners with reliable and convenient access to New Zealand-sourced news and information on developments of regional or community interest. It was accepted that Radio New Zealand could not compete with the players in the big league—Australia, Britain, France, Germany, the then Soviet Union, and the United States—on world news. Radio New Zealand would cover world events, but would not seek to compete with or duplicate programs broadcast by the major shortwave operators. Instead, it would be more of a dedicated effort using, for example, Pacific Island language broadcasts and items of specific regional interest. The decision on the upgraded service was made by cabinet on 22 August 1988. Its political character was underscored in the decision, made at the same time, to fund the service from within the existing budget of the Ministry of External Relations and Trade.

The major actors in the Pacific Islands are likely to be Australia, the United States, France, and Japan. Probably New Zealand's most valuable role in regional affairs, and therefore in international relations, is and will be to act as the South Pacific interlocutor to those outside powers whose activities most impinge on regional affairs: in security, economic, political, and environmental spheres. I would interpret Russell Marshall's

remarks, quoted at the start of this paper, as suggesting that New Zealand's South Pacific policy has become integral to its international identity. It is also helpful to New Zealand in some of its own international pursuits: the New Zealand candidacy for a two-year term on the UN Security Council for 1993–94 was endorsed at the twenty-second South Pacific Forum meeting held in Palikir, Pohnpei, in July 1991 (NZMERT 1991b, 36).

The recommendations of the official New Zealand task force (Henderson 1990), published in May 1990, indicated a willingness to formalize the shift from the hegemonism of the colonial era to a partnership of equals in a genuinely regional community. The ability of outside powers to engage the attention of Pacific Island leaders may well depend on their success in translating such pious goodwill into concrete policy initiatives. Pacific Island countries have become political actors in their own right, and this will be the core fact around which the new international relations of the South Pacific will revolve.

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Notes

1 The business approach to defense was updated to the post–Cold War situation by Hugh Fletcher, chief executive of one of New Zealand's biggest companies, Fletcher Challenge. Speaking to a meeting of the International Association of Business Communicators in Wellington on 26 March 1992, he questioned the need for a defense force “against an unnameable enemy” and suggested that the money would be better spent on growth-creating activities (*Otago Daily Times* [Dunedin], 27 March 1992).

2 This is not to underestimate the ability of the Soviet Union (or of other major powers, eg France in 1985) to engage in politically stupid behavior. A Soviet intelligence agent, Anvar Kadyrov, who entered New Zealand on a forged British passport on 4 March 1991, was arrested on 7 March for trying to obtain a false

New Zealand passport using certified birth papers of a New Zealander who had died in childhood. On 21 March, Prime Minister Jim Bolger summoned the Soviet ambassador to express New Zealand's concern. The ambassador said he would communicate the concern to Moscow, but he did not believe the affair would damage bilateral relations because it was all a misunderstanding.

3 The intensity of the anti-American sentiments in some of the submissions to the Corner committee would probably surprise many New Zealanders. "New Zealand should not identify with the exploiters and oppressors. . . . New Zealand should not have any military alliance with such a dishonourable country. . . . New Zealand should not have any military alliance with such a despicable country. . . . America has no morals in international affairs. . . . In simple words they are liars, exploiters, killers," noted one submission (Corner 1986, 26).

4 The coups in Fiji presented a moral dilemma for New Zealand. In 1983 and 1984, of students from Fiji given official development assistance awards to study in New Zealand, ethnic Indians made up 15 of 19 and 12 of 23 respectively. For 1988 and 1989, the numbers of ethnic Indian students had dropped to 2 of 8 and 4 of 19 respectively (*New Zealand Hansard* 1990, 117). This raised the unhappy thought that New Zealand scholarships were being administered on racist criteria, but no public fuss seems to have been made about the issue.

5 That is, they are either wholly obtained in the preferential area or partly manufactured there, with, in the latter instance, the Pacific Island or New Zealand content exceeding a nominated level.

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Abstract

Over the past two decades, New Zealanders have begun increasingly to identify the South Pacific as their home region. The troubles that hit the South Pacific in the 1980s accelerated and deepened this process. Official and political interest in the region has increased commensurate with its perceived greater salience in Wellington. The large number of New Zealand diplomatic posts scattered throughout the Pacific Islands facilitate more frequent visits to the region by officials and politicians, the cultivation of personal relationships with island leaders, and the maintenance of a closer watching brief over the region generally. New Zealand's South Pacific diplomacy in the 1990s is based on recognizing the diversity that exists in the region, on a multidimensional conception of security, on regionalism, on a responsive rather than a coercive approach to the challenges confronting the Pacific Islands, and on appropriate responses to those challenges. These propositions are demonstrated on security, economic, political, and environmental dimensions.