

## Responding to state failure—the case of Australia and Solomon Islands

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The Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission in Solomon Islands is an example of a response to state failure. It is also the first step in a shift in Australia's policy towards the broader South Pacific—to prevent other weak states in the region going the way of Solomon Islands and moving closer towards state failure. Responding to state failure is at the top of the international security agenda, and it is likely that the incidence of interventions in failed or failing states will increase. The Australian-led intervention in Solomon Islands has a number of distinct features that make it an interesting case study, and one which might inform future international responses to state failure.

### Characteristics of state failure

State failure differs in each instance, but there are some general characteristics.<sup>1</sup> Failing states are characterised by a breakdown in law and order, the collapse of service delivery such as education and health, and a sharp decline in living standards. The economic situation deteriorates and people lose their sense of loyalty to the government, which if not complicit becomes paralysed in the face of these problems. The government often does not have control over all of its territory, nor a monopoly on violence. People transfer their allegiances away from the central authority towards their clan, group or warlord. Ethnic tensions and conflict are therefore common.

With the end of the Cold War, a number of states which had been artificially sustained with aid and weaponry from either the US or the Soviet Union had that assistance withdrawn. As a result, several collapsed, including Somalia, Ethiopia and the then Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

Examples of state failure include Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Sudan. The classic example of state failure is Somalia in the early 1990s, when it was racked with civil war, warlordism, starvation and general chaos (International Crisis Group 2002). Today Somalia has disintegrated into two entities, Somaliland and Puntland. While Somaliland is relatively stable, some regions of Puntland are still beset by warlordism and factional fighting, and there are reports of terrorist activity.

### Impact of state failure

A failed state is a humanitarian crisis for its people—much misery ensues from the disarray, lack of services, and the drastic decline in living standards. State failure also presents a security challenge to neighbouring states and the broader region.

There was a growing international awareness of this fact in the 1990s, as it became increasingly clear that the internal problems within states could not be isolated. The effects of the collapse of Yugoslavia and the ensuing war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, filtered out into the rest of Europe, primarily in the form of refugees, and later in the form of transnational crime. The Balkan wars of succession made Europe realise that civil wars could constitute threats to ‘international peace and security’.

Though a failed state ceases to function, it maintains its juridical sovereignty—it is still recognised by the international community as a sovereign state. A bankrupt or illegitimate government representing the state can obtain money from many sources by selling aspects of its sovereignty. This is one of the factors which transforms state failure from a human tragedy into a security issue for neighbouring states.

Failed or failing states are often Petri dishes for transnational criminal activity such as money laundering, arms smuggling, drug trafficking, people trafficking, and terrorism. The example of Somalia is again pertinent, as is Afghanistan. The porous borders of failed and failing states directly affect the surrounding region. Weak or nonexistent security infrastructure in failed states means that people flows are poorly regulated, and it is relatively easy for people to enter and leave unhindered.

The failure of Somalia has had a significant impact upon its neighbour, Kenya. It is widely believed that the bombs used in the 1998 al Qaeda bombings in Nairobi and in Tanzania as well as those used in the 2002 bombing in Mombasa were smuggled across the porous Somali border. (Filkins with Lacey 2002; Burgess 2002). Such weapons smuggling is not infrequent across this border. The US State Department has commented upon the ‘violent criminal activity’ in the border region as well as ‘some indications of ties between Muslim extremist groups, including Osama Bin Laden’s al Qaeda organisation, and ‘roving groups of Somali gunmen’ (US Department of State 2003).

Since the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington DC on 11 September 2001, the threat posed by state failure has been elevated to the top of the international security agenda. As President Bush stated in the 2002 US National Security Strategy, ‘The events of September 11, 2001, taught us that weak states, like Afghanistan, can pose as great a danger to our national interests as strong states’ (Bush 2002).<sup>2</sup>

There has also been a growing international awareness of the need to respond to state failure. As Jack Straw, the British Foreign Secretary

commented in September 2002, ‘preventing states from failing and resuscitating those that fail is one of the strategic imperatives of our times’. (Straw 2002). This calculation has underpinned the Bush Administration’s new policy towards Africa: ‘America is committed to the success of Africa because we understand failed states spread instability and terror that threatens us all’ (Bush 2003).

Action to prevent impending conflict or state failure has proved far less costly—in both human and monetary terms—than responding after the event. For example, Britain became involved in Bosnia after several years of civil war; Britain spent at least £1.5 billion on this involvement. Kosovo, which saw a quicker British response, cost Britain in the order of £200 million. The preventive action taken in Macedonia, however, meant that Britain spent just £14 million (Straw 2002). These figures were broadly commensurate with the human cost of all of these crises.

Conceptions of sovereignty and intervention are also changing. The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty’s 2001 *Responsibility to Protect* contends that a state has a responsibility to protect its citizens, and if a state is unable or unwilling to do so, then there arises an international responsibility to protect. (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty 2001).<sup>3</sup> Many lessons have also been learned from statebuilding efforts in Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor and Afghanistan.

### The failing state of Solomon Islands

Before the intervention in July 2003, Solomon Islands bore many of the hallmarks of state failure. While it had not yet collapsed entirely, it was certainly failing: it was in the throes of a security and political crisis. Law and order had broken down, the economy had collapsed, institutions were weak, and the government was paralysed and had lost legitimacy in the eyes of many Solomon Islanders. Ethnic tensions continued to simmer, service delivery was poor, and there was a broad social malaise born of few employment prospects, the prevalence of guns and the general instability. Government did not have control over all of its territory, as outlaws such as Harold Keke terrorised the Weather Coast on the island of Guadalcanal. How did it come to this?

Solomon Islands is an archipelago of over 1,000 islands to Australia’s immediate northeast, in between Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. Its GDP per head is US\$530, and it had a handful of exports—fish, timber, gold and palm oil. As a result of the instability, its only export became timber. It has a high population growth rate of 3.3% per year, and there is a youth bulge.

Solomon Islands became a British Protectorate in the late nineteenth century, but the British colonial presence was not as engaged in Solomon Islands as it was elsewhere. As a result, the institutions of statehood in

Solomon Islands never firmly took root, even after decolonisation on 7 July 1978. A question therefore exists as to whether Solomon Islands was ever a properly functioning state. There remained an ill-fitting overlay of state institutions with traditional structures, and the traditional structures proved to be enduring. This contributed to the weakness of the state (ASPI 2003).

The Bougainville conflict of the 1990s spread into Solomon Islands across the porous PNG-Solomon Islands border in the form of refugees, guns, and a glorification of gun culture. Then in 1998–99, disputes occurred between two of the ethnic groups in Solomon Islands: Guadalcanalese and Malaitans. Malaitans had settled over many years on the island of Guadalcanal, and had bought traditional Guadalcanal lands and come to play a dominant role on the island. Resentment on the part of the Guadalcanalese grew into a set of demands from Guadalcanal men, and led to the formation of militias and clashes between the two sides. The conflict escalated, and on 5 June 2000 Solomon Islands police officers aligned with members of the Malaitan Eagle Force militia raided a national armoury and deposed the Prime Minister in a *de facto* coup.

The Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) of 15 October 2000 brought an end to the conflict. But the TPA itself came to an end in October 2002. The disarmament envisaged under the TPA was only partially realised, and guns continued to abound in Solomon Islands—largely in the hands of ex-militia members and gangs. The compensation-for-grievances process set out under the TPA had become corrupted—all sorts of demands based on spurious claims were made, often with intimidation.

The 1998–2000 ethnic conflict evolved into a broader pattern of criminality. Ex-militias shaded into criminal gangs with access to weaponry. Some elements of the police force were involved in the corruption and criminal activity; others were paralysed in the face of it. Members of the police force and some politicians had links with ex-militia and criminal gangs.

The breakdown in law and order affected all parts of Solomon Islands life. The government was bankrupt and there was no functioning Cabinet process. Extortion was common—politicians and officials were regularly subjected to intimidation and threats. Some politicians were also involved in corrupt activity, and as a result there was a leadership legitimacy crisis.

As a consequence of this instability, the Solomon Islands economy collapsed. Foreign investment in Solomon Islands sharply declined, as did other economic activity. GDP had halved since independence in 1978. The payroll far exceeded revenue, and often public servants such as teachers were not paid.

Service delivery was in a parlous state. Education was acutely affected—schools were closed for most of 2002. In an environment of no education and few employment prospects, the only role models for the young men were those with guns.

### **Australia's policy reassessment**

Three of the factors behind Australia's decision to intervene in Solomon Islands require analysis in this paper.

#### *Australia's interests*

First, there was a growing recognition that the disarray in Solomon Islands directly engaged Australia's national interests. In particular, there was an increasing belief that it presented a security challenge to Australia and to the broader region.

Australia's interests are engaged in Solomon Islands first and foremost because of its proximity to our shores—it is a three-hour flight from Brisbane to Honiara.

There were also transnational implications. Weak governance, poor security infrastructure, and general instability made Solomon Islands an attractive possible base for transnational criminal operations such as drug trafficking, gun running, money laundering and identity fraud. Once established in Solomon Islands, such operations might then expand into neighbouring states.

There was a strategic dimension as well. An abiding concern of Australia's defence planners is the potential for a foreign power to establish a presence in Australia's immediate region (Defence White Paper 2000). The Solomon Islands government was bankrupt, and it was therefore vulnerable to funds from all sorts of sources—both state and nonstate actors. It could consider proposals for the sale of its sovereignty, such as the scheme to dump toxic waste on an outer island in Solomon Islands. The fact that Australia was not robustly engaged in Solomon Islands meant that there were opportunities for others with interests potentially contrary to Australia's to become involved.

There were also concerns for regional security, as awareness rose of how weak and failing states can destabilise the broader region. The Bali bombing of 12 October 2002 in which 202 people died, including 88 Australians, had reaffirmed the importance of regional stability to Australia's security. In the 1990s refugees, weapons and a militaristic gun culture had flooded into Solomon Islands from the then conflict-ridden PNG province of Bougainville—this had contributed to the deteriorating security situation in Solomon Islands. There was therefore an appreciable risk that the crisis in Solomon Islands could spread back over the porous borders between Western Province and Bougainville and destabilise an already-weak PNG.

Australia's economic interests were also engaged by the instability in Solomon Islands, although this was not a decisive factor. Australian bilateral merchandise trade had significantly declined, and fewer Australian companies were doing business there.

*Australia as regional metropole*

A second factor behind the Australian decision to intervene was a growing sense on Australia's part of its responsibility to the region. In other parts of the world, Australia shared its interests with a number of other countries; in the South Pacific, it was Australia's interests that were the most acutely engaged. There was a growing belief that Australia, as the region's metropole, was the only country capable of taking the lead in fashioning a response to the situation in Solomon Islands. If Australia did not assist in such a crisis, no one would.

The rest of the region and the world views Australia in part by how it comports itself in its immediate region. There is an expectation internationally, regionally and domestically that Australia will assist in crises in its neighbourhood. The international and the Australian domestic expectation of prompt Australian assistance in the wake of Cyclone Zoe in Solomon Islands in early January 2003 attests to this expectation. If Solomon Islands collapsed completely, there would therefore be an expectation that Australia would help. And Australia has historically shown concern about humanitarian crises in the region and beyond, for example East Timor, Somalia and Rwanda.

*Australia's previous policy*

A third factor was an increasing awareness that Australia's previous policy approach towards Solomon Islands was on its own insufficient to arrest Solomon Islands' decline.

Since the independence of the island states of the South Pacific largely in the 1970s, Australia's policy approach towards the region had been one of providing countries with aid but expecting them to solve their own problems. The focus was on containing our commitment to the region.

This approach was based on a respect for the status of these states as sovereign entities, as well as a rejection of colonialism and a disinclination to become too closely involved. As the 2003 Australian Foreign Affairs and Trade White Paper stated, 'Australia cannot presume to fix the problems of the South Pacific countries. Australia is not a neo-colonial power. The island countries are independent sovereign states'. (Foreign Affairs and Trade White Paper 2003).

Australia has given a generous amount of aid to the region. Australian aid to the South Pacific has grown in the last five years from \$429 million to \$526 million in 2002–03. Australian aid to Solomon Islands has trebled in the last few years in response to the crisis, to \$37 million per year. This aid has included health sector assistance, a law and justice institutional strengthening program, advisory support to the Finance Ministry, and community and peace support. This aid has done a significant amount to ameliorate suffering, support post-conflict rehabilitation, and build capacity in Solomon Islands.

However, the provision of aid as a default policy towards Solomon Islands did little to solve the crisis in the country. Australia's policy towards Solomon Islands had relied upon the capacity and willingness of the Solomon Islands government to tackle Solomon Islands' problems. That government had proved manifestly incapable of solving the entrenched problems itself. It seemed that a more comprehensive approach was needed.

The challenge was therefore to fashion a policy approach that served Australia's interests more effectively in the region by shoring up regional stability at acceptable levels of cost and risk, and that avoided the perils of neocolonialism. There was a need to fashion a policy that came somewhere between the prevailing 'hands-off' stance and neocolonialism.

Successive Solomon Islands Prime Ministers had requested international—particularly Australian—assistance. Until June 2003, Australia had refused these requests. Such refusals were consistent with the 'indigenous solutions' policy approach, and were based on the calculation that Australia's interests were not sufficiently engaged to warrant direct police or military intervention. The broader context also influenced these decisions. For example, when Prime Minister Bart Ulufa'alu requested Australian assistance in 2000, Australia was heavily committed in East Timor and was getting prepared for the Sydney Olympics. Successive refusals reinforced an overall policy context described by one senior official as being to 'cleverly manage trouble' in the immediate neighbourhood (quoted in Dobell 2003).

### **The Australian-led intervention in Solomon Islands**

Australia's policy shift on Solomon Islands has been remarkably quick. On 22 April 2003 Solomon Islands Prime Minister Sir Allan Kemakeza wrote to the Australian Prime Minister John Howard seeking assistance in addressing the security and economic crisis in Solomon Islands.

On 5 June, Kemakeza met with Howard in Canberra to discuss possible Australian help. Several days later Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer announced a potential policy of what he termed 'cooperative intervention' to address the situation in Solomon Islands (Downer 2003a). Downer later stated:

we will not sit back and watch while a country slips inexorably into decay and disorder. I say this not just for altruistic reasons. Already the region is troubled by business scams, illegal exploitation of natural resources, crimes such as gun running, and the selling of passports and bank licences to dubious foreign interests. (Downer 2003b).

The Australian government made the conditional decision to lead a mission to Solomon Islands on 25 June, provided that such a mission had Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) support and the Solomon Islands Parliament passed

enabling legislation. These two conditions were soon forthcoming. On 30 June the Foreign Ministers of the Pacific Islands Forum met in Sydney and unanimously endorsed the proposed Australian-led regional assistance mission in accordance with the Biketawa Declaration, which provided for a collective PIF response to a crisis. (Forum Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting 2003).

Acting on Solomon Islands' Cabinet's advice, Solomon Islands Governor-General Sir John Ini Lapli made a formal request for assistance on 4 July. The Solomon Islands Parliament endorsed the operation a week later, and on 17 July it unanimously passed the enabling legislation giving immunities and powers to the military and police involved in the mission.

Accordingly, the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) commenced on 24 July. It entails a 2,225-strong deployment of police, military and civilian personnel drawn from Australia, New Zealand, PNG, Tonga and Fiji for Operation *Helpem Fren* (Pidgin for 'Helping a friend'). The primary objective of the mission is to restore law and order, by removing weapons from the gangs and militias.

The operation involves 325 police—including 155 Australian Federal Police and 90 Australian Protective Service officers. They are being supported by a large military contingent of around 1,500 Australian as well as military personnel from the region. Within this military contingent, approximately 450 are combat troops, and the rest are logistics, engineering and medical personnel. The role of this military contingent is to provide logistical support and to provide protection to the police should the circumstances on the ground so require.

The mission also includes a small number of officials from Australian government departments such as Treasury and the Department of Finance and Administration. A Special Coordinator has been appointed to head the operation.

The second phase of the mission involves broader state reconstruction, including capacity building and institutional strengthening. This involves a statebuilding and development program with elements that include law, justice, economic and financial advisory assistance. The objective of this phase is to assist Solomon Islanders to rebuild their country and to provide an environment in which Solomon Islands' democratic processes and institutions can effectively function.

It is envisaged that once the law and order situation has stabilised, the military contingent will be withdrawn. The police will remain longer to maintain law and order and to build up the capability of the Royal Solomon Islands Police. The civilian component will remain for the longest period of time, in order to assist with state reconstruction, which could well last a number of years. It is estimated that cost of RAMSI will be \$200 million in the first year.

## **Challenges ahead**

At the time of writing, the operation in Solomon Islands appeared to be going well. The size and nature of the intervention force have convinced Solomon Islanders that it ‘meant business’, and most are delighted by this fact. As a consequence, the intervention has served to pierce the climate of violence and impunity that had existed, by making it clear that the circumstances had profoundly changed. Solomon Islanders have overwhelmingly welcomed the operation and its circuit-breaking effect, as well as the prospect for the turnaround of their state. The gun amnesty has been successful, with around 3,000 weapons handed in over the three-week period. Keke’s surrender was a significant breakthrough.

But many challenges lie ahead, including tackling the difficult issue of corruption and sustaining law and order after the military withdraws. No doubt some weapons remain in the hands of gangs.

Sustaining the long-term political will of the Solomon Islands government is also critical. There has been the minimum of derogation of Solomon Islands’ sovereignty for this intervention, and therefore the mission is vulnerable to the fluctuations of political alignment in Honiara. The current Solomon Islands’ parliamentary support for the mission and its popularity among Solomon Islanders mean this is not an issue in the medium term. But this remains a delicate basis for such an operation, and might present problems in the longer term.

There is also the challenge for Australia to sustain its commitment over the long term to the requirements of state reconstruction, and the difficult task of ensuring that the Solomon Islanders’ capability and expertise are built up by this operation, and not eroded.

## **Key features of the intervention**

The Australian-led intervention in Solomon Islands therefore has the following features: it is police-led, consensual, multinational and with regional support, UN-endorsed, and comprehensive and long-term.

### *A police-led operation*

The assistance mission to Solomon Islands is primarily a police operation. While the military contingent is sizeable, it is there to provide logistical backup and support for the police as they restore law and order.

The mission is police-led because addressing the climate of criminality and impunity in Solomon Islands is primarily a policing task. While it is envisaged that the military will depart within several months once the situation in Solomon Islands stabilises, the police might remain for considerably longer, to

maintain law and order, pursue criminal investigations, and build up the capacity of the Solomon Islands police.

This is somewhat of a departure from traditional intervention operations, which have normally been military-led. It is more usual for the police role to increase once the security situation has stabilised. (McFarlane and Maley 2001).

### *Solomon Islands' consent*

The consent of Solomon Islands to the intervention is a cornerstone of this operation—indeed, it was critical to its taking place. The mission was formally requested by the Solomon Islands government, endorsed by the Solomon Islands Parliament and has the support of the majority of Solomon Islanders.

This unambiguous consent has helped allay fears in the region and beyond. It also meant that only a minimum derogation of sovereignty has needed to occur. This makes it quite an unusual intervention. This is clearly the most optimal of situations; governments do not often consent to such an intrusion on their sovereignty.

### *A regional response, with regional support*

The mission is a regional response, which was endorsed by the regional multilateral institution, the Pacific Island Forum, at its Foreign Ministers meeting in June and its subsequent meeting in Auckland in August. Furthermore, the response is crafted within the framework of the PIF's Biketawa Declaration. There is also regional participation.

This regional support and participation have been important features of this operation. A failing state is a regional issue, and often requires a regional solution. For example, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) agreed to deploy peacekeepers to the stricken state of Liberia. The mission in Solomon Islands has been able to draw on expertise from around the region and lessen concerns in the region and beyond about Australian heavy-handedness.

There has also been support for the intervention from beyond the region, including from Australia's allies. The US has been demonstrably supportive—and expectant—of Australia's leadership role on Solomon Islands. US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage observed: 'We realise failed states can reach out and touch us badly, and Australia 'is reaching out to produce a better future for the region' (quoted in Walters 2003). Britain has also supported the intervention, and it is hoped that the EU and Japan will provide increased assistance to Solomon Islands.

*UN-endorsed*

Both the UN Security Council and the UN Secretary-General have endorsed the mission *ex post facto* and commended the countries of the PIF for their collective action. The UN Security Council welcomed ‘the leadership exerted by Australia and New Zealand’ (UNSC President 2003). The UN Secretary-General also noted the leadership of Australia and New Zealand, and the importance of the ‘unanimous support for this concerted regional initiative undertaken within the framework of the Forum’s Biketawa Declaration’ (UN Secretary-General 2003).

The UN’s endorsement represents an acknowledgment that regional solutions can be desirable when the problems are of a scale and nature with which the regional can cope. The UN has demonstrated support for similar regional solutions in the past. Furthermore, the UN lacks the capacity to establish many full-scale UN transitional administrations such as those in East Timor or Kosovo.

*A two-phased and long-term commitment*

There are two important phases to this operation. The first is the restoration of law and order. The achievement of stability is the prerequisite for the successful functioning of all other elements of Solomon Islands society.

However, the fulfilment of the second phase is equally critical for the future success of Solomon Islands. This is the statebuilding phase, which entails working with Solomon Islanders to rebuild their political and security institutions, to ensure effective long-term service delivery, functioning democratic processes, and a revived economy. This will involve endowing Solomon Islands with the institutions and the capacity to maintain its own rule of law without external assistance. This requires building a robust Solomon Islands law and order sector—police, judiciary and correctional system. The second phase is therefore a long-term commitment.

**Australia and the South Pacific**

The Australian-led intervention in Solomon Islands also signifies a shift in Australia’s approach towards the rest of the island countries of the South Pacific.<sup>4</sup> While there is some continuity from Australia’s involvement in the Bougainville peace process and its leadership of the operation in East Timor in 1999, the Solomon Islands intervention has seen a distinct and declared policy reversal on the part of the Australian Government. This has entailed a rejection of the previous policy approach and marks the first step in the direction of more active engagement by Australia in the South Pacific (Howard 2003a).

The Australian government has made it clear that this mission is not a

template for future intervention. (Howard 2003b). The circumstances are different in every country in the region; Solomon Islands was in the most critical condition, and it requested assistance.

Rather, the operation amounts to an acknowledgment that the stability of the region directly affects Australia. A noteworthy feature of Australia's policy towards the South Pacific since the intervention has been that it now seems predicated on preventing future state failure in the region through increased Australian engagement.

A number of states in the South Pacific continue to face significant challenges, including law and order problems, weak institutions, economic stagnation, lack of employment opportunities, social malaise, and corruption.<sup>5</sup> The August 2003 Senate Committee Report on the Pacific assessed the economic and social indices of states such as PNG, Nauru and Solomon Islands to be worse now than they were at their independence (Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee, 2003). Employment prospects are few, education is often poor, there is high population growth and frequently a young population. Absorbing and containing the expectations of a large number of young people when there are so few jobs causes considerable social strain.

PNG continues to experience law and order and governance problems. There is a significant amount of violence in Port Moresby and in the Southern Highlands, and there is a glorification of guns and gun culture. The economy continues to stagnate, governance is weak, corruption is rife, and there has been a considerable increase in HIV infections (Windybank and Manning 2003).

Nauru, with a population of just 11,000, has exhausted its once plentiful resources of phosphate, and its government is virtually bankrupt. Nauru has been involved in money laundering and passport selling. Vanuatu is also politically unstable. It was racked by a police mutiny last year, has poor economic indicators and a lack of potable water. It has been accused of being involved in money laundering.

There is also a question as to the long-term viability of some states in the South Pacific. Of the 16 members of the Pacific Islands Forum, nearly half have populations under 100,000. In general there has been an ineffective and problematic overlay of state institutions upon preexisting social and political structures.

UN Development Program Head Mark Malloch Brown has recommended a regional approach to such issues: 'You just can't solve the chronic problems of each of the Pacific Islands States, the lack of a viable economy, weak political institutions, weak security institutions, you can't solve it island by island' (Malloch Brown 2003).

Australia has been exploring and pursuing closer regional cooperation and integration, with the aim of maximising the viability of the island states. It has promoted the concept of pooling resources of governance. While there have

been some notes of caution sounded by some governments in the region, initiatives such as a regional police training centre and regional aviation and shipping scoping studies were endorsed by the PIF in August. (PIF Communiqué 2003). These notes of caution demonstrate the need to move slowly and with consensus towards increased cooperation.

The Australian Senate's Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee has made a number of recommendations for a Pacific economic and political community, including over time a common currency, common labour market, and shared security and defence arrangements. (Senate Pacific Report 2003). While not Government policy, this Senate report is an indication of the current flurry of analysis on closer regional integration.

There has been a recognition in Australia that preventing state decline is cheaper than allowing states to deteriorate to the point where greater action is required. (Senate Pacific Report 2003). If the decline in conditions in the Pacific is not dealt with now, the cost of later restorative action will be far higher. Increasing a state's capacity to function effectively minimises the need for any future intervention.

## Notes

1. As an example of the state failure literature, see Robert I. Rotberg, 'The New Nature of Nation-State Failure', *Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2002, pp. 85–96, and Rotberg, 'Failed States in a World of Terror', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 4, July/August 2002, pp. 127–140.
2. State failure had not really featured in the current US Administration's agenda before 11 September. In the 2000 election campaign Bush even stated that Africa was outside US security interests.
3. See all British Prime Minister Tony Blair's speech, 'Doctrine of the international community', Chicago, 24 April 1999.
4. By South Pacific, this paper means the 16 members of the Pacific Islands Forum: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.
5. As an example of the work in this area, see Benjamin Reilly, 'The Africanisation of the South Pacific', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 54(3) November, pp. 261–268. The risk of regional state failure is not just confined to the immediate South Pacific. East Timor, for example, possesses many of the characteristics of potential state failure, including a stalled economy, few employment prospects, tensions surrounding the reintegration of resistance veterans into society, and weak institutions, in particular police, corrections and the judiciary.

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