Chapter -3

Australia, New Zealand and the problem of environment in the South Pacific

Australia and New Zealand being the bigger powers in the region qualify to be called regional powers. Many of the islands were colonial dependencies of these two powers. They remain the most important regional players in the area, and by virtue of their size, resources and military strength, are key players of the South Pacific Forum. Existing in the same region as the smaller island nations makes them acutely aware of their special problems and there size and resources also help them to interact with the international world on a more equal footing than the small island states. It would not be an exaggeration to say that these two countries are the bridge which link the outside or the international world with the tiny and scattered atoll nations of the South Pacific.

Following the independence of Nauru in 1968 and of Papua New Guinea in 1975, Australia has no more dependencies in the region. But the government of Australia has strong strategic interests in the region as also substantial economic, humanitarian and environmental concerns. The policy it followed through the early part of the nineties can be described as that of constructive commitment. The then Minister for Foreign Affairs Senator Gareth Evans felt that the policy was composed of the following elements:

- Promotion of close, confident and broadly based relations with Pacific Island countries on a basis which recognises their individual difference;
- Fostering of effective regional cooperation through the South Pacific Forum and its agencies and the South Pacific Commission;
• Recognition that, for the island countries, security hinges on economic and social development, and offering assistance to help them achieve both;

• Respect for full sovereignty of the Island states in relation to both their interests and their external affairs; but at the same time also

• To promote shared perceptions of the region’s strategic and security interests, laying the basis for a regional approach to situations, either internal or external that put regional stability at risk.¹

Similarly the 1987 Defence White Paper identified Australia’s area of primary strategic concern and direct military interest as an arc from Papua New Guinea to New Zealand including all the nearby countries of the Southwest Pacific.²

Again, the Department of Defence submission to a 1989 parliamentary inquiry stated that Australia had a direct interest in:

• Limiting the extent and nature of major external military power involvement in the region;

• Fostering a strategic outlook that accords with Australia’s strategic concerns;

• Encouraging Pacific Island countries to look to Australia for guidance on strategic and defence issues; and

• Facilitating Australian Defence Force operations in the region.³

Apart from these, the Australian government maintains missions staffed with diplomatic, trade, aid, aid or military officials in each independent state and most dependencies. Diplomatic supports, cash, aid, and technical assistance and specialist

¹ Gareth Evans, *Australia’s Regional Security* (Canberra, Dec 1989) p-45
³ Australian Parliament Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Australia’s Relations with the South Pacific* (Canberra, March 1989) p-146
officers encourage regional organisations. Australia’s aid programme, valued at nearly A$400million in 1989. In 1987, over 55% of Australian bilateral aid was directed to South Pacific countries, overwhelmingly to Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Western Samoa and Tonga were also in the top twenty recipients, and all other island states received some measure of Australian aid. Australia’s exports to the region are about A$1billion, and investments particularly in Papua New Guinea are substantial, and these are economic links valued by the government as mutually beneficial. The South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement of 1980 give regional products. And encouraged by the South Pacific Trade Commission which is funded by the Australian government. Australia has taken the lead in promoting the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty and in environmental protection initiatives.

However, R Babbage points out that Australia’s interests in the region are not limitless. South Pacific trade and investment constitute less than 5% of Australia’s global involvement. Australia regards itself as a middle-sized global player with its major economic interests in the Northern Hemisphere. Regarding strategy and defence, Southeast Asia is of greater concern than the Southwest Pacific.

This view is substantiated by the facts that even when the present government led by the National Party. In a White Paper on Foreign Affairs and Defence called In The National Interest, the government spelt out its priorities which deals mostly with APEC and the ASEAN but the South Pacific too finds a mention in chapter four. If the amount of space given to the area is any indication of the importance then one can’t but agree

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5 R Babbage, A Coast Too Long: Defending Australia Beyond 1990s (Sydney, 1991) p-149
with Babbage. It would however, be useful to quote extensively from the chapter to show the direction of Australia’s current policy towards the South Pacific and what it may be for the next fifteen years. Papua New Guinea continues to be the cynosure of interest.

It’s relation with New Zealand. The South Pacific is an area of significant strategic interest for Australia and Australia’s relations with countries in the region are of abiding importance. Australia and New Zealand share a unique partnership. 6

A shared background and experience and a multi-faceted relationship incline Australia naturally towards a unique partnership with New Zealand, which the Government will give priority to extending and intensifying. New Zealand is an ally and Australia’s third-largest export market, the first in importance for exports of elaborately transformed manufactures (ETMs). 7

Over the next fifteen years the Government will continue to pursue the integration of the two economies through the Closer Economic Relations Agreement (CER), cooperate closely in the defence area and engage intensively on a wide-ranging agenda. The successful pursuit of many Australian foreign and trade policy objectives will be advanced by maintaining a mutually supportive relationship with New Zealand which is economically strong, bilaterally and internationally engaged, and capable of playing a credible role in regional security. 8

A stable and prosperous PNG is a major Australian interest. A united, stable and prosperous Papua New Guinea - Australia’s closest neighbour - is a major Australian interest. PNG’s location gives it a strategic importance to Australia. Pursuing a

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7 ibid para-173
8 ibid para -174
constructive and productive bilateral relationship will be a high priority for Australia. Over the next fifteen years Australia will continue to be a major supplier to and investor in PNG, although increase in competition may reduce Australia's overall market share of PNG's imports. There are about 10,000 Australians in PNG and their security is an important consideration. Australia will support a process of sustainable economic development in PNG, aimed at enhanced self-reliance within the context of a functional and democratic state. This will require strong backing for PNG's continuing commitment to fiscal prudence, stable macroeconomic policies, structural adjustment, trade liberalisation and market reforms.

Australia's development cooperation program in PNG will undergo a fundamental change over the next fifteen years. It is designed to assist the process of securing PNG's economic self-reliance, but Australia also recognises that PNG's dependence on aid needs to be reduced in the interests of fostering a mature bilateral relationship. 9

The document points out that Australia's relationships with the countries of the South Pacific are of abiding importance. Australia's relations with the other states of the Pacific islands region will always be important. As part of the neighbourhood, these states will continue to have close historical, political, economic, aid, and community (including religious and sporting) ties with Australia. Reason: Australia's international standing, especially in East Asia and in North America and Europe, is influenced by perceptions of how well Australia fulfils a leadership role in the islands region. Australia will continue to play a significant role in trade and investment in the South Pacific, with scope for increased involvement as the economies of the larger island countries develop.

9 ibid para 175-178
It will support regional trade liberalisation and facilitation. The Government will work bilaterally and multilaterally through the South Pacific Forum and South Pacific Commission to support the efforts of the island countries to improve their economic management, to develop their natural resources sustainably and to address issues of good governance. Increased conflict and instability in this region would have negative consequences for Australian interests, including possible calls to intervene, and heightened calls for increased migration.\textsuperscript{10}

Greg Fry makes a very pertinent point regarding Australia's role in the South Pacific. "Australia will continue to play a major role in the South Pacific, but it is content to share the stage with New Zealand, France, the United States and Japan."\textsuperscript{11}

New Zealand identifies with the South Pacific more than any other country because of its relatively small size, insular geography, commitments to Cook Islands and Niue, and continued administration of Tokelau. Approximately 15\% of its population are of Polynesian origin, racial, cultural and immigration policies are of major importance. On request from island state leaders, New Zealand took the initiative in hosting the first South Pacific Forum meeting in 1971 and has fostered South Pacific cultural activities including radio and television time regularly since then. The government promoted the SPNFZ proposal in 1975; the Pacific Islands Industrial Development Scheme in 1976, and the South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement in 1980. It set up the South Pacific Trade Office in 1990 to help island exports. Over two thirds of

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{ibid} para 179-182

\textsuperscript{11} Greg Fry, 'Australia & South Pacific' in Boyce & Angel (Ed) \textit{Australia in World Affairs} (Canberra 1991) p-215
bilateral aid, the highest proportion of any donor, is directed to island countries or the South Pacific regional organisations, programmes or projects.\textsuperscript{12}

Further Hoadley points out that since 1925 New Zealand has taken responsibility for the administration of Tokelau. The administrator is the Deputy Secretary of External Relations and Trade based in Wellington. Five Tokelauan directors and the Tokelau Public Service of 168 members advise the Official Secretary based in Apia, all of whom are Tokelauans. Visiting missions from the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonisation have found little desire for independence or even greater self-government. Tokelauans are New Zealand citizens and more of them live in New Zealand now than in their home islands and it appears to be in their interest to preserve this arrangement. Tokelau receives over NZ$2000 worth of aid and technical assistance per capita from New Zealand and a number of other donors and agencies. It is a member of the South Pacific Commission but otherwise plays no active role in South Pacific affairs.\textsuperscript{13}

Hoadley opines that since 1976 New Zealand has reoriented its South Pacific strategy. Proof of which is the 1987 Defence White paper. Included among the ten principal defence objectives are the following:

- To preserve the security of New Zealand, its 200 miles (322 km) exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and the island states (Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau) for which New Zealand has defence responsibilities.
- To mount an effective military response to any low level contingency within New Zealand’s area of direct strategic concern, defined as a broad arc stretching from

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{ibid} pp-36-7
Australia through Papua New Guinea, Kiribati in the north and across to Cook Islands in the east;

- To promote the security and stable development of the South Pacific by providing practical assistance in defence matters;
- To maintain close defence cooperation with Australia in the South Pacific;
- And to provide disaster relief assistance, resource protection, rescue and medical evacuation services to the South Pacific.\textsuperscript{14}

Another major South Pacific policy review was undertaken in 1990. The resulting 300 page report contained 62 recommendations covering broadly the areas of diplomacy, economic relations, aid, cultural relations, the environment and defence and security issues.\textsuperscript{15} The tone of the recommendations was the indissoluble relationship with the South Pacific in all policy sectors and the government’s duty to promote harmony both with and within the region. The importance of New Zealand’s role lies in the fact that its presence is welcomed by local leaders because it is perceived as sympathetic and sensitive to island needs. The choice of Wellington for the signing of the South Pacific Forum sponsored convention condemning driftnet fishing are all indicators of the value of New Zealand’s constructive role.

Elaborating on New Zealand’s South Pacific Policy, Ramesh Thakur of the University of Otago while presenting a paper at a conference at ANU pointed out, “The island countries of South Pacific are New Zealand’s nearest neighbours after Australia. They bind New Zealand with historic ties and residual responsibilities, and the presence\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{14} Ministry of Defence (New Zealand), \textit{Defence of New Zealand: Review of Defence Policy 1987} (Wellington, 1987) p-31
\textsuperscript{15} New Zealand Government, South Pacific Policy Review Group, \textit{Towards a Pacific Islands Community} (Wellington, May 1990)
of more than hundred thousand Pacific Islanders in New Zealand adds a domestic dimension to the country’s external relations. These factors in turn shape the perception of New Zealand’s broad interests in the region. Politically, New Zealand seeks to maintain regional stability and foster a favourable relationship with Western countries; economically, New Zealand aims to preserve and develop the South Pacific as a valuable export market and area of investment and to promote economic development in order to underwrite political stability.”

To help achieve these ends, New Zealand maintains a considerable diplomatic presence in the South Pacific. A more tangible demonstration of New Zealand’s interest is a range of assistance measures given to the South Pacific countries. These are supplemented by efforts to improve the access of South Pacific goods to the New Zealand market, the transfer of technology and expertise and the provision of transport services.

Referring to the role of these two states in the area Mediansky contrasts them with the small island states. All the island states share a sense of vulnerability, as they are conscious of their limited capabilities to protect their sovereignty, their outlying territories and offshore resource claims. Economic security is a keenly felt and overriding concern.

In contrast Australia and New Zealand stand apart by virtue of their size, wealth, economic development and military capabilities. These two nations are also the major economic and military aid donors in the South Pacific. The role of Australia and New Zealand has been further enhanced by the increased regional activities of the great

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16 Ramesh Thakur Australia, New Zealand and Small States in World Order paper presented at ANU’s New Directions in International Relations implications for Australia Conference (Canberra, 15-17 Feb 1989) p-29
17 ibid p-30
powers, which has tended to drive the small states closer to Canberra and Wellington. Another factor has been that the establishment of the 200 miles Exclusive Economic Zone has greatly expanded the need for offshore surveillance, which can only be carried out with added external assistance for which a majority of states have looked to Australia.\textsuperscript{18}

He adds that the central role of Australia and New Zealand, in defining regional security in the South Pacific, is partly based on the politico-economic role of these two states in the region. And partly, because of the somewhat paradoxical way in which the island states seek to assure their security. The paradox stems from, on the one hand, linking regional economic and security interests to the West, while on the other hand wishing to minimise external – and therefore predominantly Western – involvement in the region.\textsuperscript{19}

But why do these two countries see handling of environmental issues also as important for the region's security, the answer probably lies in the White Paper of 1997 of the Australian government which recognises the importance of nonmilitary threats arising out of environmental degradation. “Australia's security interests (should not) be seen exclusively in terms of potential military threats or regional conflicts. Over the next fifteen years it is likely that even more attention will be paid to so-called non-military threats such as pandemics, illegal migration, refugee flows, environmental degradation, narcotics and transnational crime. For many countries these are a more immediate concern than the prospect of invasion or military intimidation. They reinforce the

\textsuperscript{18} FA Mediansky ‘Nuclear Free Security In The South-West Pacific?’ \textit{Australian Outlook}, vol-39 Aug 1985 p-79

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{ibid}

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importance of taking a broad view of security, which goes beyond military and defence issues. They underline the linkages between poverty and instability, and the need to pursue policies of trade and investment liberalisation and sustainable development which help to create growth and increase incomes. They also underline the contribution that effective development cooperation programmes can make to growth and stability. This provides the rationale behind our examination of Australia and New Zealand’s role with respect to the issues of nuclear testing, climate change and driftnet fishing.

The problem of nuclear testing

The role of Australia with respect to nuclear testing is unique. It is the only country which though being an independent nation willingly allowed the British to test on its soil thereby exposing its citizens to hazards of radioactive fall-out.

The British research on atomic energy played a crucial role in initiating the Manhattan project, which produced the first atomic bomb in 1945. It was Britain who as a wartime ally had informed USA of the possibility of building the bomb. When the war was over, the Americans in the pursuit of their national interest froze Britain out of their nuclear programme. And soon the United States became the sole possessor of the bomb. Slighted Britain decided that the possession of the bomb was a necessary component of its self image of a great power. So in 1947, Britain secretly embarked on a nuclear programme to develop its own bomb.

A bomb had to be tested. Where could Britain test its bomb? Testing in Britain was out of the question. After all how could they expose their people to such a risk. The

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20 Australia Government, *In The National Interest* (Canberra 1997) Chap 1, para 7
only possible sites were in Scotland where minor experiments had been conducted. But as an official involved in the tests deposed before the parliamentary inquiry, “The estate owners would be very angry if anything happened to their pheasants and deers.” Australia on the other hand was at the other end of the globe, had vast spaces more importantly its government was more English than the English themselves. In 1949 Robert Menzies was elected as Prime Minister. He was an example of the servility that helps colonialism breed. He could be relied upon to treat a request for a site as an honour for Australia. In a top secret message in September 1950, Britain asked Menzies whether the Australian Government would be prepared in principle to agree that the first United Kingdom atomic weapon should be tested in Australian territory. Without consulting his cabinet colleagues, Menzies said yes.

The whole atomic project, the Australian government boasted in 1955, was a striking example of inter- Commonwealth cooperation on the grand scale. England has the bomb and the know-how; we have the open spaces, much technical skill and great willingness to help the Motherland. To help its Motherland then, Australia cheerfully accepted the fallout from these tests, allowed it to behave like a nuclear colony of the British all this with pride. Even though it was aware that there are no benefits for Australian security from these tests.

In 1952, the first British A-bomb successfully vaporised a Royal Navy frigate in the Monte Bello Islands off the coast of Western Australia. Between then and 1963 the

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23 Stewart Firth, *Nuclear Playground* (Sydney, 1987) p-10
25 ibid p-15
British exploded a further 11 atomic bombs in Australia, at Monte Bello and at two sites in South Australia, Emu and Maralinga. They also carried out 600 smaller experiments with nuclear materials, many involving high explosives and most causing radioactive contamination. Comments Firth, In the nuclear history of the Pacific, colonies and bomb tests go together. The USA, UK and France all chose Pacific Island colonies as the places best suited for the biggest mushroom clouds and the most fall out. As for Australia, the British could use it as a nuclear colony because the Australian government was so keen to please.26

What is even more shocking claim analysts is the scant regard paid to the safety of the people who were in the danger of being exposed to radioactive fallout. The Americans had at least tried to move the islanders to safety, but the British were not bothered, Australian government in its eagerness to please Britain turned a blind eye. The callousness of the authorities is highlighted in the Royal Commission of Inquiry report. While the British underquoted the figures of population in the area, the Australian government did not make any efforts to do the needful. Says Firth, the Monte Bello bomb created fallout detected thousands of kilometres away at Rockhampton on the Queensland coast. But because of British secrecy and indifference, we will never know what it did to the people closest to Monte Bello. Of those people, the Aborigines would have been most at risk because of their preference for living with few clothes and in the open.27

The entire British test programme was shrouded in veils of secrecy. Britain never revealed the full facts to the Australians, the latter overwhelmed by their love for their

26 Stewart Firth *Nuclear Playground* (Sydney 1987) p-13
27 *ibid* p-70
motherland not only did not object to the step-motherly treatment but obliged by controlling the press from writing about the programme. This it claimed was being done in the national interest. Whose national interest was being served? This of course is a different story. An example of the British attitude was the instance of an official who warned against the dangers of saying too much to the Australians, who might disagree with the British scientists assessment of the risks or they might suggest that, in order to ensure that necessary precautions against contamination were in fact taken. It is better to keep the Australians at a distance. So instead they instead of giving details of the tests gave endless assurances of the safety of the experiments.28

But the fallout from the tests was difficult to conceal. Rainwater collected from Rockhampton, Cairns and Brisbane almost 3,600 kilometres away showed 200 times more radioactivity than normal after the first test. But there was no comprehensive monitoring undertaken. Three years later the government set up atomic weapons test committee, which had a network of 29 sampling stations to monitor radioactivity. But the system was a flawed one. Pliable people were appointed like Ernest Titterton who was British’s persona grata, this when Menzies had stated that no one with an interest in the success of tests will be appointed.29

The Great Victoria Desert of South Australia attracted the bomb testers. They chose two sites, Emu and Maralinga. Though remote it was home to the aboriginal population, a fact that both the British and the Australians cared little for. Only halfhearted measures were taken to protect the aborigines. Before the atomic trials at


29 ibid p-477
Emu in 1953, an official merely visited cattle stations to ask the white managers to warn the aborigines to stay away from the test site. Small hunting groups like the aborigines have their own lifestyle where interaction with the outside world is at the minimum, to presume that they would get the message and stay away is naïve. The official before the Royal Inquiry admitted the inadequacy of this.\textsuperscript{30}

Though Titterton had held in 1980, that there was no fallout from the tests, and that any investigation in it was a complete waste of money, the inquiry on the basis of evidence that it gathered concluded that there had been a fall out and that people had been affected by the radioactive mist generated by the bomb exploded in Emu in 1953. The affected people were as far as 173 kms from Emu at Wallantina and elsewhere. As the symptoms described the aborigines reveal.\textsuperscript{31}

Since the government claimed that that there was no fallout and that the tests were safe, it had an excuse for not doing anything for those whom had received radiation injuries.

When the British selected Maralinga in South Australia for their atomic test site, the Australian government abolished the Ooldea Reserve in 1954, to pave the way for the mushroom clouds. A Native Patrol Officer WB MacDougall tried to remove the attractions of the Reserve area by taking away the sacred objects. Neither of these measures stopped the traditional owners of the Maralinga site the aborigines from traversing the area. MacDougall pleaded for a comprehensive of the aborigine movements so that adequate measures for their safety could be taken. Nothing of the sort happened instead, MacDougall was reprimanded for placing the affairs of a handful of

\textsuperscript{30} ibid pp –172-3
\textsuperscript{31} ibid pp-174-7
natives above those of the British Commonwealth of Nations.\textsuperscript{32} The Safety committee apparently lied to the government. It claimed that continuous ground and air patrols were conducted. In reality nothing of that sort occurred. An army officer recalling the Maralinga tests said, "The warning signs were no good to the aborigines, they couldn't understand them."\textsuperscript{33}

Firth points out that detail by detail, the accumulated evidence points to one conclusion: the British atomic bomb men, supported by Australian scientists, proceeded with the Maralinga explosions knowing that people were in the prohibited zone and were therefore likely to be injured or killed. After the British tests officially ended in 1957, they continued secretly until 1963 in what was called the Maralinga Experimental Programme. These minor experiments caused the dispersal of radioactive materials. Obsessive British secrecy and the Australian exclusions from the test sites have ensured that very little is actually known about the tests or their effect.\textsuperscript{34} When the Inquiry Commission asked a prominent British scientist involved in the programme that whether the reason that Australia was chosen was the fact that for the British government, the contamination of Australia rather than of the UK may be politically more acceptable? He replied in the affirmative.\textsuperscript{35} The clean up of these sites was done in the same cavalier attitude. The consequence: the sites are still as hazardous as ever. The Royal Commission recommended that Britain should pay for the clean up the sites so that they are rendered safe. This has yet to happen. Even more damaging is the fact that Britain has still not

\textsuperscript{32} ibid pp- 303-9
\textsuperscript{33} Adrian Tame & Robotham, Maralinga—British A-Bomb, Australian Legacy (Melbourne, 1982) p-141
\textsuperscript{34} Stewart Firth, Nuclear Playground (Sydney, 1987) pp-78-9
\textsuperscript{35} Australia Government, The Report of the Royal Commission into British Nuclear Tests in Australia (Canberra, 1985) p- 405
admitted moral or legal responsibility for the radioactive problem they have created in another’s country. A legacy that Australia carries to this day in the form of high rates of cancer.

Australia and New Zealand are formally aligned with the USA in the ANZUS Treaty, and have traditionally provided the US with close political support. Australia also hosts a number of US defence communication facilities such as those at North-west Cape, Pine Gap and Nurrungar. Until the SPNFZ both the countries provided US ships with unqualified access, but with the SPNFZ New Zealand does not allow nuclear ships at its ports, a cause for crisis in the ANZUS. With this background we can now discuss the initiatives taken by the two countries to ensure that the South Pacific is nuclear-free.

Both the countries have a strong anti nuclear movement. While for Australia it stems from the fact that it was used as a test site. For the New Zealanders, their proximity to Moruroa is a cause for concern. Whenever the labour parties have been in power they have come up with nuclear free proposals. There had prior to the SPNFZ proposal many such proposals put forward by various pacific governments, political parties, peace groups, church organisations and trade unions. The Australian Labour Party (ALP) was attracted to the concept as early as 1962, after the successful denuclearisation of Antarctica in 1959. The New Zealand Labour Party leader Norman Kirk was drawn to the idea after the Tlatelolco treaty in 1967. However, it was the New Zealand government’s 1975 which gained the serious attention of the governments of the region and of the United Nations General Assembly. In early 1975, New Zealand’s Labour Prime Minister, Bill Rowling, began seeking support for his NFZ proposal in early 1975. He first

36 Stewart Firth, *Nuclear Playground* (Sydney, 1987) pp-80-1
approached the Australian Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam for co-sponsorship of the proposal at the General Assembly. Whitlam agreed to support the proposal but did not agree to co-sponsor the proposal. At the SPF meeting it supported the proposal. Its misgivings were on account of the fact that it may jeopardise the interest of US and ANZUS. The resolution was co-sponsored by Fiji and passed by the General Assembly as an endorsement of the idea. But before the proposal could make any headway conservative governments came to power both in New Zealand and Australia. The issue was placed at the backburner. 37

While the concept died at the official South Pacific Forum level, peace movements and indigenous peoples' groups in many regional countries continued to promote the idea through national policies aimed at encouraging their respective governments to establish a regional nuclear free zone.

In August 1983, in the context if an upsurge of domestic and South Pacific-wide concern over international developments and regional developments in the nuclear arms race, Australia's newly elected Hawke's Labour government officially proposed the SPNFZ initiative at the annual South Pacific Forum. The proposal was endorsed at the 1984 Forum, negotiated in the ensuing year through a Forum Working Group chaired by Australia, signed at the 1985 Forum Meeting, and, following ratification by 8 Forum states, came into force in December 1986. The treaty was of a highly selective in its scope and application. While it prohibits nuclear weapons testing, acquisition, land-based stationing of nuclear weapons, it contains no controls over ship, submarine or air-based transit and deployment of nuclear weapons, either on the high seas or in the territorial

37 Greg Fry, A Nuclear-Free Zone For The South West Pacific –Prospects And Significance Working paper no75 (ANU, Canberra, September 1983) p-25
waters within the zone. Nor does it prohibit the firing of nuclear weapons from the zone, so long as the launch platforms are not land based and the targets do not lie within the land territories in the zone.\textsuperscript{38}

Despite an appearance on the surface of continuity, the Australian proposal was more of a preemptive bid. Its aim was to have a limited form of free zone before the more radical proposals of New Zealand or Vanuatu could crystallise. The close alliance relationship between Australia and the USA and the extensive Australian involvement in US nuclear strategies, including hosting of major US communication, control, command and intelligence bases, acceptance of nuclear-armed ships, coupled with Australia's own direct nuclear interest in uranium mining and export made it a rather unlikely evangelist for a regional nuclear free zone concept.\textsuperscript{39} Its prime motive was to protect ANZUS its own interests and US.

At the time that the Hawke Government initiated the SPNFZ proposal, it was acutely aware of a regional trend towards denuclearisation. This trend included the strongly anti nuclear national and regional policies of the New Zealand Labour Party whose electoral fortune was on the rise, and were elected to power in 1984. The Melanesian states too had anti nuclear postures. If a radical proposal had been put forward, it would have placed Australia under a dilemma of finding itself under strong regional pressure either to participate in the arrangement or stay out of any zone arrangement and risk loss of regional influence and the establishment of a rival islands-

\textsuperscript{38} Michael Hamel Green \textit{The South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty: A Critical Assessment} (Canberra, 1988) pp-43-102

\textsuperscript{39} Michael Hamel Green, \textit{Regional Arms Control In The Pacific: Island State responses to SPNFZ paper} presented at \textit{The Pacific in the Metropolitan World} Conference (Brisbane, 2July1989) p-6
only organisation. The latter arrangement would shift the regional focus from a Western alignment to an independent security view, a hardly desirable option for the Aussies.\textsuperscript{40}

In two years, from the election of the Lange Labour government in New Zealand, US and New Zealand parted company and New Zealand became a champion of the anti-nuclear cause in the region. Nuclear politics in the South Pacific assumed a new significance. The Americans slowly became aware that an old ally so trustworthy that often forgotten, no longer wanted to do everything Washington asked. Lange declared that New Zealand would not give port access to nuclear-armed ships. It refused permission twice to the USS Buchanan. This stand put New Zealand in the geopolitical spotlight as never before. Green peace activities in the state drew French attention. And as if to confirm New Zealand’s status as an anti nuclear nation, the French sank the Greenpeace’s Rainbow warrior ship at the Auckland Harbour. The ship was to take protestors to Moruroa atoll to protest against the nuclear testing by France. Lange made most of the affair. “We are an enemy of nuclear threat and we are an enemy of testing nuclear weapons in the South Pacific. France puts bombs and spies in New Zealand, it is not the New Zealand way or the Pacific way of doing things.”\textsuperscript{41}

Though the New Zealand government walked out of the ANZUS, there were limits to which it could go to press its point. Dependent on the West both for defence and for trade places restraints on it. For instance when the Rainbow warrior was bombed, a French couple believed to be secret agents who masterminded the blasts were arrested by the New Zealand government. At first New Zealand’s Lange reiterated that these

\textsuperscript{40} Michael Hamel Green \textit{Regional Arms Control In The Pacific: Island State responses to SPNFZ paper} presented at \textit{The Pacific in the Metropolitan World Conference} (Brisbane, 2July1989) pp-7-8

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{New Zealand Herald} 16 September,1985

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terrorists would not be handed back to France. Then, France decided to act tough. First New Zealand wool was not allowed into EEC or French colonies then came the turn of butter. Feeling the pinch soon the government buckled under pressure. The price of butter was all that France needed to ensure New Zealand’s compliance to its wishes. Thakur points out that while it exposed the vulnerability of small states but the fact that France apologised, explains that many small states like New Zealand have the capacity to resist.

What then was the SPNFZ’s real aim? It was basically aimed at the French nuclear tests. An issue that arouses strong public anti nuclear sentiment. In 1996, when France decided to resume testing, it met with widespread protests. Here too Australian government’s was a reaction to the public protests while the New Zealand government led the protests. In fact the Australian government was perceived as a reluctant follower of public protests and as having been upstaged by the more robust reaction of the New Zealand government. The initial reaction of Senator Gareth Evans, then Australia’s foreign minister—that it could have been worse—was intellectually defensible but fuelled public anger back home. The public was baying for French blood. There were criticisms of the fact that Australia did not suspend its uranium sales to France.

On the question of nuclear waste dumping both the countries follow a policy similar to that being followed by the other SPF states. But the Johnston Atoll controversy again saw the Australian position more in line with the American one while the New

42 Stewart Firth Nuclear Playground (Sydney, 1987) pp-90-1
43 Ramesh Thakur Australia, New Zealand and Small States in World Order paper presented at ANU’s New Directions in International Relations implications for Australia Conference (Canberra 15-17 Feb 1989) p-19
44 Ramesh Thakur ‘The last bang before a total ban’ International Journal L1, Summer, 1996 p-478
Zealand position was closer to that of the other SPF states. The controversy also highlights the sometimes-uneasy relationship that Australia shares with the SPF. While the SPF countries were critical of the move, Hawke was defensive of the move as being in the larger interest of disarmament. This invited a lot of criticism. Defending Hawke an indignant newspaper columnist wrote whether Australia which not only set up the Forum but also funds it should at all bother about SPF. “The allegation against Hawke on the chemical weapons issue was that he was acting as a stooge for the Americans. SPF members claimed that Australia’s handling of the issue had created mistrust and suspicion, and then called Hawke two faced. The New Zealand premier also abandoned his previous commitment for support for the Australian position, and joined the chorus against the destruction of chemical weapons in Johnston atoll. Many of the countries were questioning whether Australia should be a member at all. Given that the Forum, and to considerable extent the countries that comprise it are funded by Australia, is it worth for Australia to really bother to remain a member.” 45

Oakes feels is that what was ignored that Hawke believes that Australia’s national interest would be better served by a convention banning chemical weapons than opposing destruction of them. 46 A view the SPF was not ready to accept.

As the preceding discussion shows while the Australian position on the issue has been based on its international commitments like the ANZUS, and US interests in the region, while the New Zealand position particularly in the period under Lange struck a more independent note. At times a proactive rather than it’s neighbour’s reactive role. Lange brought New Zealand onto the centrestage. Its strident antinuclear stance may

46 ibid
have caused tension with the United States but it enhanced New Zealand's leadership role in the region.47

The problem of climate change

Both Australia and New Zealand have played an important role in highlighting the climate change problem. For New Zealand, which has the responsibility for administering certain territories like the Cook Islands and Niue, the prospect means not only additional aid but also looking after the refugees. Moreover, some of its own islands may also be threatened with the rise in the sea level.

Australia’s support initially for a strong climate change agreement was based on three factors first, its concentration of population centres in low-lying areas, second, its large areas of semi-arid marginal land that could easily become desertified with global warming. Third, its location in the South Pacific, with its vast expanse and low-lying relatively small islands. Australian officials’ fear that several hundred thousand refugees from the Pacific islands inundated by a rise in sea level would seek refuge in Australia. “The potential economic, social and security costs of not acting to avert environmental threats are massive. Even if it were possible for the Australian continent itself to be insulated from environmental degradation, we would be still facing grave consequences from environmental threats in our region and beyond. A rise in the sea levels to take just one example would have a devastating effect on the small countries of the South Pacific. It would destabilise a region of primary strategic interest to Australia. It would create in

47 Ramesh Thakur Australia, New Zealand and Small States in World Order paper presented at ANU’s New Directions in International Relations implications for Australia Conference (Canberra 15-17 Feb 1989) p-30
its wake scores of thousands of environmental refugees, who would mainly look to Australia for resettlement. It would place heavy additional demands on our aid programme. In short quite apart from the cost in terms of human misery and dislocation to island communities, which by itself is important, it would jeopardize vital Australian national interest.48

The Framework Convention on Climate Change was signed at the Rio Conference. Today, 159 countries have ratified the Convention. It should be remembered that Australia was one of the first countries to ratify the Convention and in 1992 implemented a national program on climate change. The Convention lays the basis for global action "to protect the climate system for present and future generations". It provides a "framework" for governments to work together to carry out policies and measures that address climate change. Australia, together with other signatories, has agreed to work towards stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. It was acknowledged that countries would strive towards such levels in a time frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure food production and health is not threatened and to allow economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.

The first Convention of the Parties [COP-1] held in March 1995 in Berlin commenced the negotiation process to develop a protocol to the Convention. It is here that a change in the Australian view was perceptible. It was after the coming of the National Party to power not willing to really cut back on its emissions. It stressed the

48 Gareth Evans & Bruce Grant *Australia's Foreign Relations In The World Of The Nineties* (Melbourne 1991) p-153
need for differentiated targets. Environment minister Sen Robert Hill in an address to the National Academies Forum explained the government's stance. "I led Australia's delegation to the second Conference of the Parties [COP2] in Geneva in July 1996. The Ministerial meeting was an important staging point in the negotiations that are continuing to focus on the adoption of a protocol at the next ministerial meeting at Kyoto in December 1997. Australia endorsed the Ministerial Declaration with the notable exception of a key part on legally binding targets." He pointed out, "We were not prepared to associate ourselves with an open-ended commitment to legally binding targets in advance of knowing what they were and how they would be structured. Instead we put forward a proposal that countries' commitments should be differentiated to reflect differing national circumstances." This stance led to widespread criticism. The Labour party was critical, so was a group of 131 Australian professional economists who expressed deep disquiet about the direction of the Australian Government's climate change policy.

Justifying his government's policy the Prime Minister John Howard said, "Australia's growing economy is being burdened with a new, unrealistic and unfair speed limit upon growth, a speed limit imposed by uniform mandatory emission reduction targets to address the global problem of climate change.

My foremost responsibility as Prime Minister of Australia is to promote and protect the national interest. That is my goal for this issue as it is with every other area of

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49 Robert Hill, *Australians and the changing climate – past experiences and future destiny*, address to the National Academies Forum (Canberra, 26 Nov 1996)
50 ibid
51 Pacific Report vol-10 no 13 p-6
public policy." Reacting to the criticism by the opposition parties he said, "My political opponents have sought to criticize me for this but I will never be apologetic for protecting Australia's national interest. Whenever I have been attacked for defending the national interest Labour has sided with foreign interests at our expense. It has been this combination of posturing and opportunism that has been the Labour way. The former Environment Minister, Ros Kelly, boasted about unilateral efforts in reducing emissions. Now Labour offers no solution - it has no ideas, only postures. My message to them is that the national interest is not served by posturing on this issue instead of advocating a realistic and fair solution."

His most controversial statement was the fact of doubting the scientific evidence of climate change. "While there are still many uncertainties surrounding the science of climate change, particularly relating to the timing and magnitude of climate change that we might expect, the Government accepts the science of climate change and the need for proportionate action in line with the precautionary principle. The potential risks to the global environment are simply too serious to ignore. Along with other leaders at the recent South Pacific Forum, I recognised and endorsed the deep concerns regarding the impact of greenhouse emissions on rising sea levels and changing weather patterns on Forum members, especially low lying island nations.

The Government is committed to ensuring that Australia will play its part in tackling the problem of climate change. That is part of our enlightened national self-interest. Pulling our weight, however, doesn't mean having to cope more than our fair share of the task. But that is what is being asked of Australia by the European Union.

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52 John Howard, *Address to the Australian Chamber of Manufactures*, (Melbourne, 6 Oct 1997)
53 *ibid*
Australia cannot sign up to proposals that would lead to the export of jobs and

Our energy efficient minerals and metals processing industries." The European Union was advocating a legally binding uniform reduction target for greenhouse gas emissions of 15 per cent from 1990 levels by the year 2010. Howard's contention was that "The enormity of the task that the European Union's proposed uniform target threatens to impose on Australia, is simply out of all proportion to Australia's contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions. Let us not forget that Australia accounts for only 1.4 per cent of global emissions. This compares with the United States, which accounts for 22 per cent of global emissions, and the European Union, which accounts for 14 per cent of global emissions. The European Union proposal is unachievable because it does not reflect Europe's own recent performance. Nor can Europe demonstrate how it will achieve the target. According to the European Commission, the EU is not on track to meet the implied Rio target of stabilizing emissions at 1990 levels by 2000. Without the collapse of East German industry - whose emissions fell by almost half - EU emissions would have risen 9 per cent above 1990 levels by the year 2000. As the EU can expect no further one-off windfalls, such as the collapse in East German industry, their proposal should be regarded as unrealistic. It cannot provide the basis for long-term action." The Howard Government claims to be committed to achieving protection of the environment in ways that safeguard the economic future and the jobs of Australians.

Reacting to the result at Rio, Robert Hill said, "This is the first time that the international community has agreed on specific and substantive measures to combat climate change." Speaking after the announcement that Australia should limit its

54 ibid
55 ibid

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greenhouse gas emissions to an 8 per cent rise in emissions over 1990 levels, Senator Hill said this was a win-win result that required a comparable sacrifice from Australians to that being borne by other nations. 56

The Minister said that Australia's consistent and reasoned commitment to reduce global warming during the 11-day Third Session of the Conference of the Parties Of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP3) in Kyoto had paid off. "Australia led the quest for a differentiated response to the climate change problem as part of a concerted international effort to combat global warming," he said. "We have achieved a differentiated outcome which is more equitable for Australia than many would have thought possible, based on international acceptance of our specific national circumstances," Senator Hill said.57

"We argued for a comprehensive approach to the coverage of the agreement to include all sources, sinks and gases, and have successfully negotiated a result which meets these objectives under the current agreement or its successor," the Minister said. Senator Hill said developing countries would be encouraged to consider taking on future commitments under the agreement through jointly implemented activities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. "The Kyoto Protocol protects Australia's export competitiveness and employment prospects in Australia's substantial mineral processing and energy export industries," he said. "The agreement to establish a greenhouse gas emissions trading regime will be an essential component of this." 58

56 Robert Hill Media Release Kyoto 11 December 1997
57 ibid
58 ibid
This new direction given to Australia’s climate change policy has been the subject of much criticism not only by the Labour Party but also by scientists and economists. The Australian government’s arguments are based on economic modelling by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) which show that just aiming to stabilize emissions to 1990 levels by 2010 and achieve a 10% reduction by 2020 will cost each Australian $9000.

The group of 131 economists who are upset with the policy, cite the report of over 2000 distinguished international scientists under the auspices of the International Panel on Climate Change that found that balance of evidence which suggests a discernible human influence on global climate. Their statement says that economic studies have found there are many potential policies to reduce greenhouse emissions for which the benefits outweigh the costs.59

Policy options exist that would slow climate change without harming employment or living standards in Australia and which in fact improve productivity in the long term.

Speakers at the seminar felt that the studies on which the government based its arguments overestimated the costs while underestimating the benefits. They felt that it would be damaging to Australia’s long term interest to be locked in to a fossil fuel based economic structure while the rest of the world shifted to low emission energy sources over the next decades. Most importantly, as many speakers emphasized that the stand is a contravention of the 'progressive stand that Australia normally takes on international issues.60 What it did show was the pro-business attitude of the National Party was

59 Notes taken during a discussion on Australia’s climate change policy at the weekly departmental seminar at Dept of International Relations, RSPSAS, ANU, Canberra, 7 Sept 1997 also the statement of the scientists as quoted in the Pacific Report vol 10 No 13 p-6
60 ibid
bringing it in conflict with the green movement in the country. Many activists of the Australian Conservation Foundation, and other such groups planned demonstrations and organised support to pressurise the government to take a more progressive stand. Even in parliament many senators urged the government to cooperate with the rest of the world in developing common binding targets and time tables for green house emissions, and to pursue the new job opportunities available if Australia puts in place energy conservation measures and embraces new technology.\(^{61}\)

Even New Zealand which is traditionally more sensitive to the needs of the small islands has been a part of the veto coalition composed of USA, Australia and New Zealand, which is against binding targets or drastic reductions. Its reasoning is that it would make no sense for New Zealand to act unilaterally when it is advocating at the global level more flexible and sophisticated international mechanisms, which would allow greenhouse gas emissions to be reduced in a much less economically disruptive way.\(^{62}\) Under the current policy, introduced in 1994, a decision on whether to introduce a low level carbon charge was to be taken in June 1997, based on an assessment of whether New Zealand was on track to achieve its goal of reducing the growth in gross CO\(_2\) emissions by 20% and stabilizing net CO\(_2\) emissions at 1990 levels by 2000. Current projections indicate that New Zealand is not on track to achieve the stabilization of net CO\(_2\) emission at 1990 levels by the year 2000 (net CO\(_2\) emissions derived by offsetting CO\(_2\) absorption by planted forest"sinks" against gross CO\(_2\) emissions). New Zealand's CO\(_2\) absorption by planted forests has been considerably lower than expected.\(^{63}\)

\(^{63}\) ibid
Reacting to allegations by the Labour Party, the minister explained how the position taken by the European Union couldn’t be acceptable. "The New Zealand government has stated plainly for over a year now that solutions have to take account of the fact that different nations face widely different compliance costs. In simple terms, the dirtier a country was prior to signing the convention, the easier it is to meet national targets; conversely, the greener a country was prior to the convention, the harder its task. "That's because it is much cheaper to close down inefficient, ancient, polluting industries (as in the former East Germany) that it is to reduce emissions from modern plants." 64

Stating the position New Zealand will be advocating at Kyoto as a uniform greenhouse gas reduction target of up to 5% below 1990 levels, the Minister for the Environment, Simon Upton said, this reduction will take place within a five year budget period beginning no sooner than 2005 and is conditional upon the following requirements: inclusion of at least the three main greenhouse gases (CO2, methane and nitrous oxide); provision for international emissions trading; the appropriate inclusion of carbon 'sinks'; flexibility in the choice of policies and measures to achieve reduction targets; and provision for developing countries to accept emission reduction commitments in the future. Mr. Upton said, "whether or not these conditions are accepted will greatly affect the costs faced by all parties. The non inclusion of any of these items would affect the ambitiousness of any target we could sign up to at Kyoto". "The policy announced is consistent with the line New Zealand has been promoting. The target, I believe, places New Zealand amongst those countries seeking to promote an outcome from Kyoto that is both realistic and achievable. "Given the ongoing growth of emissions

64 Simon Upton, Press Release Wellington 26 June 1997
in most developed countries since 1990, achieving a 5% reduction target would represent very significant progress by the Annex I countries," concluded Mr Upton.65

What does this position really mean? If one analysed the policy it is evident that New Zealand's advocacy of 'least cost mechanisms' simply means that Zealand opposes a costly approach to lowering emissions when the same environmental outcome could be achieved at lower cost. Least cost is not no cost: New Zealand would still face adjustment costs like every other developed country. Are least cost measures less environmentally ambitious? No. According to the government, least cost measures simply ensure that the desired environmental outcome is achieved at the lowest total cost to society, or in this case, across all developed countries. The more costly it is to reduce emissions, the less ambitious any agreed target is likely to be.

Including sinks in the manner proposed by New Zealand would not protect emitters from facing up to the costs of adjusting to lower levels of emissions. New Zealand has pledged that it will place any credits' from forest sinks onto the world market meaning that New Zealand sink credits will be available to all developed country emitters. On the other hand, New Zealand emitters would have access to the least costly abatement opportunities wherever they occur within developed countries. Trading effectively creates a 'world price' for emissions that all players would have to face.

Will greenhouse gas reductions occur evenly across all countries under a tradeable scheme? No. Emissions will be reduced wherever it is cheapest to make those reductions. However, trading will equalise the 'marginal cost of abatement' across the developed countries by creating a world price for carbon in much the same way as there

65 Simon Upton Press Release Kyoto 2 December 1997
is a world price for oil. This means that the cost of reducing a tonne of emissions in one
developed country will be the same as it is in any other developed country. Equalising the
marginal cost of abatement in developed countries ensures that the lowest cost emission
reduction opportunities are taken up first and, by doing so, total costs are also low. Is
New Zealand alone in advocating that forest sinks and emissions trading must be
elements of an agreement at Kyoto? No. The United States, Canada, Norway, Australia
(the veto coalition referred to earlier) and some individual countries within the EU
support the inclusion of forest sinks and emission trading in an agreement at Kyoto.
Other developed countries are receptive to the principle of emissions trading and are also
willing to consider the appropriate role for forest sinks. Does opposition to mandatory
policies and measures mean that New Zealand is opposed to legally binding targets?
Mandatory policies and measures and legally binding targets refer to quite different
things. New Zealand supports legally binding targets but is opposed to legally binding
policies and measures which must be used to meet those targets. New Zealand believes
that maybe what works in one country not work in another and that countries ought to
have flexibility to implement whatever domestic actions they deem necessary to meet
those targets. What would be the economic impact of New Zealand's target? "The
Government has commissioned modelling work to ascertain the economic impact of a
variety of possible targets. Modelling demonstrates that: it is more costly to reduce CO2
emissions from fossil fuels in New Zealand that in most other countries because we are
already heavily reliant on renewable electricity generation; the cost of cutting emissions
falls sharply if, (i), the basket of gases includes all gases, (ii), emissions trading is
introduced, and (iii), forest sinks are included; to meet a 5% reduction target solely by
cutting CO2 emissions domestically (ie without including other greenhouse gases, trading, or sinks) would lead to a cumulative loss in GDP of 0.7% over the next two decades, (in other words, GDP grows at a slightly slower rate); allowing emissions trading reduces the cost adjustment by 60% (i.e. reducing cumulative GDP loss from 0.7% to 0.4% over the next two decades); allowing for sinks reduces the cost by a further 30%; the suite of measures New Zealand proposes would, therefore, lower the costs of adjustment by up to 80%. Although the reduction in the rate of overall economic growth is small, the impact of any reduction target on particular sectors of the economy - notably the fossil fuel based energy sector - is much higher (but again, will be greatly reduced by adopting the conditions outlined above) New Zealand believes cost reductions of the order of 70-80% can't be ignored by parties to the Convention. If all those conditions are adopted it will significantly assist the likelihood of a successful conclusion, not just to the Kyoto conference, but future negotiations at which large reductions will be required.  

New Zealand feels, however, no further progress is likely beyond these first steps unless there is progressive evolution of commitments to developing countries. New Zealand is supporting legally binding commitments because of the dramatic increase in CO2 emissions forecast for the future, that is the basis for action.

Reflecting on what Kyoto meant for New Zealand Upton says, “We went to Kyoto prepared to commit to a 5% cut on 1990 emissions provided the target included all three principal ghgs, flexibility in how we could respond, carbon sinks (including forestry) and provision for emission trading. To my surprise, the conference signed up not to a uniform target but differentiated targets. The overall reduction (-5.2%) was

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66 ibid
almost exactly what New Zealand had proposed, but the individual country targets ranged from an 8% reduction for the EU countries to an 8% increase for Australia. New Zealand was allocated a stabilization (0%) target. New Zealand succeeded in gaining recognition for the role forest sinks play in removing carbon from the atmosphere.⁶⁷

Still disappointed with the way regime negotiations seem to be taking place, the Minister has in a recent speech to Royal Institute of International Affairs called for a more realistic approach which is workable. Otherwise he says it just may be too late.⁶⁸

The problem of driftnet fishing

Australia and New Zealand have been at the forefront of efforts to ban driftnet fishing in the South Pacific. Many of the Pacific countries became concerned about the problem in the 1980s as the distant water fishing nations started raiding their waters for tuna. Prime Minister Bob Hawke reported on the Tarawa Declaration to the Parliament “Two matters of fundamental importance dominated the Forum—the serious threat posed by driftnet fishing in the southern Pacific Ocean. It is no exaggeration to say—I stress this—that for some of our neighbours and partners in the South Pacific this issue, driftnet fishing represents, almost literally, matter of life and death. I now table the communique adopted by the Forum and the Tarawa Declaration on pelagic driftnet fishing.⁶⁹

The Tarawa Declaration set out the member nations' profound concern at the damage being done to the economy and the environment of the South Pacific region by this indiscriminate, irresponsible and destructive fishing technique. The threat they post

⁶⁷ Simon Upton Reflections, Wellington 27 December 1997
⁶⁸ Simon Upton, Risks Surrounding Kyoto Protocol speech to Royal Institute of International Affairs, London 14-15 June 1999
to southern Pacific fish stocks and other marine species has been compounded by the massive increases in the number of fishing vessels from Japan and Taiwan using driftnets. The scientific evidence available to us at the Forum indicates that the present indiscriminate use of driftnets threatens the very existence of the southern Pacific tuna fishery, and therefore, the very livelihood of the people who depend so very deeply upon its existence. The Tarawa Declaration seeks to ban pelagic drift net fishing from the region and it calls for a meeting of regional experts to develop a convention to achieve this objective. 70

However, the SPF realises the need for support on the issue from the defaulters. “To be effective on the high seas, the convention will require the support, or at least the concurrence, of the major fishing nations. The gravity of the threat requires urgent action; and Australia readily accepts its responsibility to take a lead in advancing this important objective of the Forum. It was with that responsibility in mind that I had already raised this matter in the United States and Europe, as part of Australia's efforts eventually to secure a worldwide ban on this fishing technique.” 71

Australia and New Zealand played a very prominent role in the General Assembly when the FFA countries and USA etc tabled a resolution in the United Nations calling for a complete ban on driftnet fishing in the South Pacific. Japan tabled a counter-resolution calling for the production of scientific evidence to support a ban on driftnet fishing in the South Pacific.

After initial debate in the General Assembly, the sponsors of the two resolutions agreed to amalgamate them. This resulted in the General Assembly in December 1989

70 SPF Forum Communique (Tarawa, 1989)
adopting a resolution on large-scale pelagic driftnet fishing and its impact on the living marine resources of the world’s oceans and seas. The joint resolution was a compromise in that it proposed a (I) a moratorium are placed on all large scale pelagic driftnet fishing on the high seas until 30 June 1993, unless effective management and conservation are taken based on sound statistical analysis; (ii) immediate action be taken to reduce large scale pelagic driftnet fishing in the South Pacific and that the cessation of this method of fishing in the region occur no later than 1 July 1991, as an interim measure, until appropriate conservation and management for South Pacific albacore tuna are entered into by all concerned parties; and (iii) there be an immediate cessation of expansion of large-scale pelagic driftnet fleet on the high seas in the North Pacific.

Prior to the tabling of the joint resolution at the United Nations, South Pacific countries and territories, metropolitan countries with dependencies in the region, and Japan and South Korea met in a series of meetings in New Zealand in Nov 1989 to finalise a convention to ban driftnet fishing in the South Pacific and to consider aspects of a management regime. Welcoming the Japanese agreement to end driftnet fishing Australian Minister of Environment, Senator Gareth Evans said – “Australia warmly welcomes the announcement made by Japan a few days ago that it will cease all high seas driftnet fishing by the end of 1992. This is a major step towards the global moratorium. The Japanese Government has announced that its driftnet fishing fleet will be cut back by 50 per cent before July 1992 through a reduction in the number of vessels, the length of their nets and the areas of operation. Japan will implement a complete global moratorium

72 MB Linda & MSJD Paul High Seas Driftnetting: The plunder of the global commons (Kailua May 1994) pp-1-10

on the practice by 31 December 1992. In concert with other concerned nations, we will press for the Japanese action to be matched by the other major driftnet fishing nations that continue to operate on the high seas, such as Korea and Taiwan. We are especially concerned about the continued presence of a large fleet of Taiwanese driftnet vessels that are fishing in the Indian Ocean.\textsuperscript{74}

The convention known as the Wellington Convention was signed by FFA member countries and South Pacific territories attending the meeting. The convention has taken effect after four countries have deposited their ratification.\textsuperscript{75} It was also stated in the Australian Parliament. The following countries have signed the Driftnet Convention Australia (2 February 1990), Cook Islands (29 November 1989), France (30 April 1990), Federated States of Micronesia (29 November 1989), Kiribati (13 February 1989), the Republic of the Marshall Islands (29 November 1989), Nauru (13 February 1990), New Zealand (29 November 1989), Niue (29 November 1989), Palau (29 November 1989), Tokelau (29 November 1989), Tuvalu (13 February 1990), Vanuatu (13 February 1990). The Cook Islands ratified the Convention on 24 March 1990. Australia has urged those South Pacific states and territories, which have not yet done so to sign the Convention.\textsuperscript{76}

On the issue of driftnet fishing the Australian and New Zealand governments tried to voice the concerns of the Pacific islands as well as their own concerns. On this issue it could be said that Australia and New Zealand tried to don the mantle of leadership in the region.

\textsuperscript{74} Australia Government Parliamentary Debates Hansard, 28Nov 1991,
\textsuperscript{75} Ramesh Thakur, \textit{The South Pacific} (Otago,1991) p-85
\textsuperscript{76} Australia government, Parliamentary Debates, Hansard, 10 May 1990 p-1213