

NEAR ABROADS AND ARCS OF INSTABILITY: CONCEPTUALISING THE REGION IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC AND EURASIA

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I. INTRODUCTION

The end of the Cold War encouraged a more regional perspective among many states. The universal, global clash of ideologies that overlaid differences between cultures during the Cold War was replaced by a more particularist approach, such that conceptions of ties with other states is based not simply or primarily on politico-economic system, but on history, culture, values and geography. These developments have been reflected in growing regionalism – the deliberate integration of countries within a region – which, rather than being seen as an alternative to globalisation, is a response to it and is also perceived as being complementary to it.

One example of the shift from global, ideological thinking, to geographical, cultural thinking was explored by Simon Dalby in an article written in 1993 analysing New Zealand's nuclear-free policy and the resulting break-up of the ANZUS alliance. Dalby writes that:¹

The nuclear ships ban policy was linked to [New Zealand Prime Minister] David Lange's attempts to rearticulate New Zealand's role as a South Pacific power, and as one that was concerned with its region more than with the preoccupations of a North Atlantic view of the world.

This shift took place in the last years of the Cold War, while the end of the Cold War also encouraged a more regional perspective among many other states, including the successor to the Soviet Union. The Russian Federation not only found itself in new borders and surrounded by newly independent states – what became known as the “near abroad” – but it also abandoned the Soviet Union's claim to global interests and its promulgation of a universalist ideology. Nevertheless, how Russia responded to these new circumstances was a matter of acute political struggle, reflecting divergent views about what kind of state Russia is, and what kind of state it should be.²

While the shift to a regional focus might indicate an emphasis on geographical position and also on historical and cultural ties with neighbouring states, this does not mean that such regions objectively exist – that they are natural features of the world resulting from its geophysical structure or social-

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1 Simon Dalby “The ‘Kiwi Disease’: Geopolitical Discourse in Aotearoa/New Zealand and the South Pacific” (1993) 12 *Political Geography* 437 at 448.

2 James Headley *Russia and the Balkans: Foreign Policy from Yeltsin to Putin* (Hurst and Columbia University Press, London/New York, 2008).

cultural pattern. Regions, like continents, are constructed – as the thriving discipline of Critical Geopolitics tells us.³ The application of this point to European integration is well-known, but it applies equally to other regions or sub-regions in the world. For example, Martin W Lewis argues in relation to the Pacific:⁴

It is ... a bit beside the point to worry about whether the Pacific can or should be regarded as one, two, or several regional entities. Regions are by their very nature imprecise designations, imperfectly construed by the human imagination. As imaginations necessarily vary, divergent regional schemes will always remain in competition.

But while all our major geographical divisions are constructs rather than natural givens, they are not therefore unreal or even arbitrary. To the extent that people conceptualise an area that they call Asia, then that Asia – whatever shape it may have – has a very real cognitive existence, one that can influence the course of human history.

Conceptualising a region as part of foreign policy formulation may provide not only a basis for regional integration, the coming together of nearby and like-minded states and societies; it may form the basis of regional threat perception. A neighbourhood may be a source of mutual support, but it may also be a source of danger. This is especially the case with so-called “new” or “non-traditional” security threats that have found their place in security policy and the study of security since the end of the Cold War.⁵ This mode of thinking finds expression in the term “arc of instability” which has been used in a number of contexts including, as I will show, Russian and Australian rhetoric in respect to their southern and northern neighbourhoods respectively.

In this article I examine the conceptualisation of region in Russian thinking in relation to the former Soviet space, and New Zealand and Australian thinking in relation to the South Pacific. I begin by analysing the concept of the “near abroad” as developed in post-Soviet Russian discourse and apply the findings to the question of the actual and potential development of integration in the post-Soviet space. I also discuss the notion of an “arc of instability” to Russia’s south and the implications in terms of thinking about geography, security, identity and region. I then consider whether the term “near abroad” captures New Zealand and Australian conceptions of the South Pacific. As with the Russian case, I consider the implications for potential regional integration in the South Pacific. Finally, I analyse New Zealand and Australian conceptions

3 Gearóid Ó Tuathail *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space* (Routledge, London, 1996); Gearóid Ó Tuathail and Simon Dalby (eds) *Rethinking Geopolitics* (Routledge, London, 1998); Gearóid Ó Tuathail, Simon Dalby and Paul Routledge (eds) *The Geopolitics Reader* (2nd ed, Routledge, London, 2006).

4 Martin W Lewis “Locating Asia Pacific: The Global Politics and Practice of Global Division” in Terence Wesley-Smith and Jon Goss (eds) *Remaking Area Studies: Teaching and Learning Across Asia and the Pacific* (University of Hawai’i Press, Honolulu, 2010) 41 at 56.

5 “Traditional” security threats are military threats posed to states by other states; “non-traditional” security threats are those posed to states or individuals by a range of human or other agents: environmental degradation, drugs trafficking, epidemics, economic crisis, and so on; see, for example, David A Baldwin “The Concept of Security” (1997) 23 *Review of International Studies* 5; and Terry Terriff, Stuart Croft, Lucy James and Patrick Morgan *Security Studies Today* (Policy Press, Cambridge, 1999).

of regional security and examine the notion of an “arc of instability” which has been particularly prevalent in Australian discourse in relation to the South Pacific. Overall, I point to similarities and differences in the South Pacific and Eurasian contexts which may contribute to understanding the dynamics of conceptualising regions and realising them in practice.

II. RUSSIAN CONCEPTIONS OF THE FORMER SOVIET SPACE

A. The “Near Abroad”

Russia was subsumed within the larger entity of the Soviet Union before 1992, although the Russian Federative Soviet Socialist Republic was the largest and most dominant of the 15 republics. Particularly after the Second World War, the USSR acted as the “vanguard state” model for communist transformation on all continents, competing with the “vanguard” Western state, the United States, as well as later with the Chinese communist model. Hence, although the Soviet Union was situated within Europe and Asia, its interests were global and the communist model was assumed to be universal. The communist universal model competed with the liberal democratic/capitalist model all over the world, and although much of this can be seen as a mask for *Realpolitik* competition between two superpowers, the ideological construction of identity was not merely a fiction (the elites of both sides really did believe that their state had a universal mission).

Under Mikhail Gorbachev (1985-1991), Soviet foreign policy was “de-ideologised”. Whereas previously ideology had led to global over-commitment in Soviet foreign policy, Gorbachev and Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze placed more emphasis on priorities arising from the Soviet Union’s actual geographical location spanning from Eastern Europe to the Pacific (a space which is sometimes termed “Eurasia”) – such as by encouraging détente in Europe, and by improving relations with China. But they also emphasised the Soviet Union’s *cultural* identification with both Europe and Asia. For example, in his speech in Vladivostok in December 1986, Gorbachev argued that the Soviet Union was very much Asian as well as European,⁶ but he also referred elsewhere to the “Common European Home” to which the Soviet Union belonged.⁷ Gorbachev spoke of “universal human values”⁸ – arguing that major problems (such as environmental devastation or threat of nuclear war) needed global action and cooperation – but he also promoted *regional* co-operation to deal with “new” or “non-traditional” security threats in a period of greater interdependency.

6 For English translation, see FBIS-Soviet Union (29 July 1986) R1-R20.

7 For example, Mikhail Gorbachev *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (Collins, London, 1987) at 195.

8 For example, “Speech by Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev to the Second Summit of CSCE Heads of State or Government Paris 19-21 November 1990” (November 1990) OSCE <www.osce.org> at 1.

The New Political Thinking of the Gorbachev era was founded on close linkage between domestic and foreign policy: foreign policy was designed to contribute to the success of *perestroika*. In the first year after the break-up of the Soviet Union, the foreign policy of the Russian Federation as pursued by Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev was also closely intertwined with domestic policy. As with New Political Thinking, there was the assumption that the domestic reform programme needed a favourable international environment which could be achieved through ensuring good relations with neighbouring states, but particularly with the states of Western Europe and North America whose support of Russian democratic and market reforms was assumed to be crucial for their success. But the “liberal Westernisers” – Kozyrev, and the proponents of the radical market reforms of “shock therapy” – went further: they believed that Russia’s interests and values were now shaped by the fact that Russia was becoming a liberal, democratic state. Put simply, Russia was joining the “West” – and in terms of identity, it was becoming “Western.” For example, in a wide-ranging article published in a leading Russian newspaper on the anniversary of the August 1991 failed coup that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kozyrev identified Russia’s first foreign policy priority to be “entering as a great power in the family of the most advanced democratic states with market economies, so-called Western society”, and he called these states “very much the natural allies of democratic Russia”. Although he argued that one of Russia’s foreign policy priorities would be the use of the “Russian Federation’s advantage as a unity in diversity of ethnicities, religions and traditions” – writing that “[w]e have the unprecedented possibility to be in Asia, Asians, in Europe, Europeans” – he added that “in the world as a whole [we will be] democrats above all”.⁹

Kozyrev’s “liberal Westernism” signified a re-ideologising of Russian foreign policy: interests were shaped by the nature of Russia’s political and economic system, rather than its specific geographical position or its cultural orientation. Its foreign policy was based on the universal values of liberal democracy, including allying with other states which embodied such values wherever they were. This policy was widely criticised within Russia from a variety of political perspectives; but the most challenging indictment came from realists who argued that official policy was too ideological and was neglecting Russia’s real interests. In particular, they argued that the official policy’s “Atlanticist” orientation – its focus on relations with Western European and North American states – detracted attention and resources away from areas of more pressing concern, primarily the newly independent republics of the former Soviet Union.

This is the region often referred to in Russia as *blizhnee zarubezh’e*, usually translated into English as the “near abroad.” According to William Safire, who produced an early analysis of the English neologism, the term was not

9 Andrei Kozyrev “Preobrazhenie ili kafkianskaia metamorfoza: Demokraticheskaiia vneshniaia politika Rossii i ee priorityty” *Nezavisimaia gazeta* (Russia, 20 August 1992) 1, 4.

entirely new in Russian as it had been used ironically by dissidents in the 1970s and 1980s to refer to the Soviet Union's communist satellite states, implying that they were supposedly close not just geographically, but also ideologically and politically – that is, they were friends/comrades.¹⁰ From early 1992, Russian newspapers began using the term to refer to the 14 Soviet successor states other than Russia, which is how it is defined in the *Encyclopedia of Russian History*.¹¹ Although the term was often used by critics of the Yeltsin administration, it was also adopted by policymakers in the administration themselves; for example, Safire found an example of Kozyrev using it in April 1992.

As Safire points out, many Western critics interpreted the phrase to mean that Russia did not consider the former Soviet countries to be fully independent. For example, he quotes Strobe Talbott who was then a columnist for *Time* magazine:¹²

Many Russians have not yet been able to accept the idea that the 14 non-Russian republics of the U.S.S.R. are today independent foreign countries. Russian politicians have even coined a new phrase – the near abroad – to distinguish between the former republics and the rest of the world.

After citing other examples, Safire concludes that the term “near abroad” means “the claim by Russia of political interest and influence in states adjacent to it that were once part of the Soviet Union”, and he calls it a “heavy-handed Russian version of the Monroe Doctrine”.

A more recent example of such an interpretation is given by David Warren in the *Ottawa Citizen*:¹³

... the Russian idea of a “near abroad” [is] of a poorly-defined and infinitely extendable area of Russian influence, in which smaller nation states must submit to methodical Russian bullying, or alternatively to direct invasion.

Warren was writing in the wake of Russia's war with Georgia in 2008; yet, this was the first time that Russia had invaded a post-Soviet republic; and whatever additional undertones there might be to the term “near abroad” it is not “infinitely extendable” nor “poorly-defined” – it refers to the former Soviet space. But neither are such undertones of neo-imperialism inherent in the term itself which literally means the near [*blizhnee*] land beyond the border [*za* – beyond – *rubezh* – the border]. Those who called for closer attention to this area did not necessarily demand Russian hegemony within it (although some did): they argued that it should be the priority area of Russian foreign policy because of its geographical proximity, because of the cultural, economic and historical ties between Russia and the former Soviet republics, and because there were matters arising from the break-

10 William Safire “On Language; The Near Abroad” *The New York Times* (USA, 22 May 1994).

11 Christopher Williams “Near Abroad” in James R Millar (ed) *Encyclopedia of Russian History* (Macmillan Reference, New York, 2004) 1031.

12 Safire, above n 10.

13 D Warren “Russia's near abroad” *The Ottawa Citizen* (Canada, 13 August 2008) A10.

up of the Soviet Union that required attention. And indeed, although Kozyrev ostensibly agreed that the former Soviet space was a priority area (but disagreed with some internal critics about how Russia should go about protecting its interests there), in practice the region was relatively neglected in the early post-Soviet period. For example, the Russian government deliberately broke up the rouble zone in order to pursue its own economic reform programme, and Kozyrev made few visits to the republics (as a result, policy tended to be set more by the Defence Ministry than by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

From around 1993, there was a shift in focus towards the former Soviet space in Russian foreign policy, and the phrase “near abroad” was used more often by policymakers. This signified an increased attention to geographical position over universalist ideology, the socio-political nature of the state and global concerns. However, it was not just about geography, since Russia has immediate land, and close maritime neighbours which do not form part of the “near abroad” (the former Soviet space) – China, Mongolia, North Korea, Finland, Japan – while not all of the former Soviet republics are immediate neighbours (Moldova, Armenia, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan). It is clear that there is an historical and cultural component to the concept of the “near abroad,” as well as a belief that the former Soviet republics are interconnected in terms of economics and security. This was evident in a number of speeches that Putin made during his second term as president (2004-2008) when he sought a greater role for Russia in the former Soviet space. For example, in his annual address of 2005, he famously told the Federal Assembly that the collapse of the Soviet Union was the “a major geopolitical disaster of the century”; and he argued that Russia is “bound to the former Soviet republics – now independent countries – through a common history, and through the Russian language and the great culture that we share”.¹⁴ This indicates a cultural dimension to Russian hopes for integration in the former Soviet space. It is believed that there are common ties which bind the countries of the region closely together: historical links, linguistic connections and the intermingling of ethnic groups throughout the region.¹⁵ Policy is designed not only to reflect these circumstances but also to ensure that they continue through the promotion of Russian culture throughout the “near abroad.”

14 Vladimir Putin “Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation” (25 April 2005) President of Russia <archive.kremlin.ru>.

15 This is a political “Eurasianism,” distinct from, though at times drawing on, the cultural “neo-Eurasianism” that considers Eurasia as constituting one historical civilisation separate from the West. The most prominent exponent of neo-Eurasianism is Aleksandr Dugin; see Marlène Laruelle “The Ideological Shift on the Russian Radical Right: From Demonizing the West to Fear of Migrants” (2010) 57 *Problems of Post-Communism* 19 at 22; Valerii Senderov “Neo-Eurasianism: Realities, Dangers, Prospects” (2009) 71 *Russian Politics and Law* 24; John B Dunlop “Aleksandr Dugin’s ‘Neo-Eurasian’ Textbook and Dmitrii Trenin’s Ambivalent Response” (2001) 5 *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 91. See also Matthew Schmidt “Is Putin Pursuing a Policy of Eurasianism?” (2005) 13 *Demokratizatsiya* 87.

B. Is the Former Soviet Space a Region of Integration?

The rhetoric of the “near abroad” is therefore an assertion of the existence of a region that can be the basis for integration. It is a defence of a particular potential region as against other potential regions: sub-regions within the former Soviet space, regions that include countries outside the former Soviet space together with some former Soviet republics or a wider region that includes the former Soviet space (Europe-Asia). It is based on an interpretation of what constitutes the most significant ties between diverse populations. “Near abroad” is therefore not an objective concept: we cannot look at a geographical map and determine Russia’s “near abroad” because there are no natural geographical frontiers to it. This, however, is true of all regions. Nor can we deduce it objectively as a large-scale cultural grouping or “civilisation” from a cultural map depicting languages, ethnicities and religions since, again, deciding what count as significant differences and similarities is a matter of political choice and conflict.¹⁶

There is a logic to the idea that the former Soviet republics might integrate more closely, economically and politically. These republics had until 20 years ago been part of the same state; most had been part of that state for over a century, and some for much longer. This interconnectedness cannot be expected to have disappeared overnight: the former Soviet republics remain geographically proximate and with strong economic and infrastructural ties between them. Even if we consider the Soviet Union to have been an empire, it was a land-based empire with no clear-cut geographical – and in some areas, cultural – distinction between metropole and periphery. Interconnectedness of an empire of this sort might be expected to continue well beyond the existence of the empire because of geographical proximity and also because the infrastructure in the empire was built up over time to enable those ties.¹⁷ In contrast, as I show below in relation to New Zealand, geography and economics have pushed former colonies away from former maritime imperial powers such as Britain. Britain itself has reoriented more towards its immediate neighbourhood through the European Union, while there is not the long-lasting infrastructure to tie the former metropolitan power and its former overseas colonies together in the way that railways and roads (and in the case of the Soviet Union, pipelines) connected the multinational land empires.

This legacy of interconnectedness is one reason why many Russian analysts and policymakers insist on the inevitability of integration in the Commonwealth of Independent States (the CIS – made up of the former

16 This is contrary to the approach of what might be termed “scientific geopolitics” which has become dominant within Russian intellectual and political circles and is reminiscent of “scientific Marxism” but with a cultural rather than a socio-economic deterministic content; Laruelle, above n 15.

17 For instance, the final destination of the train that I caught from Riga (Latvia) to Vilnius (Lithuania) a year after the two Baltic states had joined the EU was Simferopol in Crimea. Many of the elderly passengers preparing their bunks for the long journey had clearly maintained their personal ties from the Soviet times.

Soviet republics with the exception of the Baltic states). For example, Sergei Chernyshev, Director of the Russian Ministry for Economic Development's Department for Economic Cooperation with the CIS, argues that integration in the CIS under Russian leadership is inevitable – as long as Russian policymakers recognise that it is in the sovereign rights of those countries (and Russia itself) to develop relations also with countries outside the former Soviet space – because it is in the interests of all the member states.¹⁸ This is because their “economies are closely inter-related, and their combined potential is more powerful ... [and they share] common problems requiring solutions”. This argument is based on integrationist arguments reminiscent of those that underpinned early European integration; Chernyshev writes later that “[e]ach state, taken separately, is strategically vulnerable and its channels of access to world markets are limited; however, things will be quite different if these states pool their efforts”. However, that potential is not being realised at present: for example, he points out that the percentage of their overall trade that CIS countries conduct with each other is half that of the equivalent figure for EU member states. Furthermore, he acknowledges that there are alternative integrationist projects involving CIS countries, such as the European Partnerships with the EU, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) which includes China. Despite all this, he asserts that “the complementarity of the CIS countries as an objective basis for integration is still strong”.

Chernyshev thereby seems to accept the idea of an objective region defined by economic potential, and neglects other factors that might contribute to disaggregation. An interesting comparison can be made with the views of Konstantin Kosachev, then Chairman of the International Affairs Committee of the Russian State Duma. He perceives an “anti-Russian bias” in certain CIS states (such as Ukraine) and an agenda of scaring the West into supporting integration with those states.¹⁹ In response, he suggests that Russia should consider switching to normal market relations with them just as it has with any “far abroad” country (presumably, for example, by charging full market prices for oil and gas). Nevertheless, this does not mean that Russia should switch towards “neutral neighbourliness or long-distance friendship”: Russia should still promote integrationist projects, but without Russian domination, and without restricting them to the “near abroad.”²⁰ Kosachev suggests, for example, the SCO as a forum, and also argues that other states such as Turkey could be brought into what was then the project for a Single Economic Space between Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine.²¹

Kosachev seems to accept, then, that the “near abroad” is not the only potential region for integration, taking into account the realities of geography and economics. Furthermore, involvement in integration in the post-Soviet

18 Sergey Chernyshev “Towards a United Eurasia” (2010) 4 *Russia in Global Affairs*.

19 K Kosachev “From the Logic of ‘Near Abroad’ to the Community of Interests” (2005) 51 *International Affairs (Moscow)* 85 at 86.

20 At 88.

21 At 88.

space is not incompatible with “membership of Euro-Atlantic organisations” and he suggests that arguments to the contrary – assuming a zero-sum, competitive integrationism involving the countries in-between the EU and Russia, what he calls the “current ‘tug-of-war’” – have the sole purpose of reducing “Russia’s influence in the region of its natural interests”.²² But, having said all this, Kosachev also assumes that there is an objective logic to integration in the former Soviet space. He argues that in some former Soviet republics it is the elites who argue that integration must be with the West rather than with Russia because it is in their own narrow interest. But it is “the economy and national business, especially business engaged in real production rather than speculation” as well as those people who have traditionally gone to Russia to work, that will lose out if there is no CIS integration and only integration with the West.²³ While this may be true, Kosachev, like Chernyshev, seems unable to move beyond the idea that there is an objective, natural reality to integration in the post-Soviet space. For example, he asserts that CIS countries have been “lured by the prospects of European integration and ... enticed away, like a bride, from the parental home by a promise of marriage” which may never happen.²⁴ It is such language that continues to rankle among many people in the former Soviet republics, and in fact contributes towards pushing them away from the supposed “parental home.”²⁵

In fact, while it may be true that the republics were bound together in an integrated economy in the Soviet Union, that does not mean that they will remain so. This is partly because of changing access to alternative markets and a new geography of economics developing, but also because of deliberate choices to assert independence and break away from Russian dominance.²⁶ These were, of course, factors in the Baltic States joining the EU, and Ukraine in certain periods has also looked to follow a similar path. Even the leadership of Belarus, the state closest to Russia, has failed to implement fully its proposed Union with Russia because of the limitation this would place on its sovereignty (and President Lukashenko’s own power). Russia’s significantly larger economic clout, especially with its energy boom, is seen as threatening, and states resist this hegemony. Putin may be right that there is some logic to reintegration, but economic logic is not everything. In addition, at least

22 At 88, 91.

23 At 88.

24 At 91.

25 For an example of the view that talk of CIS integration is merely window dressing for Russian hegemony, see Oleksandr Sushko “The Dark Side of Integration: Ambitions of Domination in Russia’s Backyard” (2004) 27 *The Washington Quarterly* 119.

26 Paul Kubicek notes in the context of the CIS that the lack of successful multilateralism supports the argument that “regionalism will work best with more developed, more firmly-established and secure states, not newly formed, weak states that are wary of their neighbours and need to focus on developing their own political institutions”; Paul Kubicek “The Commonwealth of Independent States: An Example of Failed Regionalism?” (2009) 35 *Review of International Studies* 237 at 252-253.

until recently, Russia's own preference for bilateral relationships, as well as the emphasis on protecting Russian sovereignty throughout the Putin era, are obstacles to real integration within the CIS.

In judging the actual degree of integration within the former Soviet space, it is useful to draw on the common distinction between *regionalism* – the top-down policy by governments to increase regional interconnectedness and regulation – and *regionalisation* – the bottom-up, unplanned increasing interconnectedness between states in a region usually in the economic sphere but also in social and cultural spheres.²⁷ Considering regionalism first, as Alexander Libman shows, although there are many official declarations of CIS integration, there is not much progress towards regionalism in practice (in fact, the CIS has failed to develop as an intergovernmental organisation, and has in some respects become moribund).²⁸ Similarly, Paul Kubicek concludes his detailed analysis of the failure of integration in the CIS with the statement:²⁹

The CIS as a whole ... seems almost anachronistic and frequently irrelevant to political, economic, and security considerations in the post-Soviet space, an area that has lost much of what would denote it as a distinct "region" in international relations.

Such regionalism that is occurring is not taking place across the CIS, but among certain states within it. The deepest formal integration is in the Russia-Belarus Union. There is almost complete free trade between Russia and Belarus, and the intention is to create a common currency, foreign policy and citizenship;³⁰ but even here, there are obstacles to greater supranationalism, as suggested above. Beyond this, integration has been closest between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, the core members of what is now the Eurasian Economic Community, EurAsEC (also including Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). They instigated a customs union in 2010 and are now developing the Common Economic Space (CEC) to promote free movement of goods, capital and people.³¹ It is envisaged that this will become the Eurasian Economic Union in 2015, and already there is supranational institutionalisation; for example, the CEC now has competency for trade negotiations. Nevertheless, the difficulties Russia has faced in bringing Ukraine into the grouping demonstrate the obstacles to integration in the wider "near abroad." There have also been attempts to develop regional groupings of states excluding Russia, the most prominent being GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova). However, GUAM is undermined

27 Alexander Libman "Regionalisation and Regionalism in the Post-Soviet Space: Current Status and Implications for Institutional Development" (2007) 59 *Europe-Asia Studies* 401.

28 *Ibid.*

29 Kubicek, above n 26, at 260.

30 Alexander Libman and Evgeny Vinokurov "Regional Integration and Economic Convergence in the Post-Soviet Space: Experience of the Decade of Growth" (2012) 50 *Journal of Common Market Studies* 112 at 114.

31 *Ibid.*; Xinhua News Agency "Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan launch common economic space" (1 January 2012); Dmitry Medvedev "Trading places critical to region" *The Australian* (Australia, 5 November 2012) 8.

partly by geographical incoherence. In contrast, in the Caucasus, an area which might be considered a well-defined geographical region, integration has been limited by the hostility between Armenia and Azerbaijan.³²

As for regionalisation, the record since 1991 is mixed. After the break-up of the Soviet Union, the amount of trade between the former Soviet republics declined significantly, and many of them now trade more with countries outside the former Soviet space than with those within it. On the other hand, there was a revival of international trade involving the republics with the economic upturn after 1998; nevertheless, such regionalisation has not been occurring across the former Soviet space as a region but within sub-groupings of former Soviet states, or else involving other, non-former Soviet countries as well.³³ Indeed, in a recent analysis, Libman and Vinokurov show that there has actually been a *relative* decline in the proportion of internal economic activity even in the period of growth: while absolute levels of trade and GDP across the member states of the grew significantly over the decade from 1998, the proportion of inter-regional trade in relation to both dropped.³⁴ In other words, intraregional trade went from shrinking to growing from 1998, but not at the same rate as the growth in GDP and overall trade volume. This was the case both across the CIS region as a whole and also sub-regions such as EurAsEC.

Yet, there have been signs of growing levels of other forms of regional activity, especially labour migration and education. For example, Libman and Vinogorov observe “an immense increase in labour flow in the CIS-12 [the CIS member states] and almost all other sub-regions”. This migration “benefits a lot from traditional links between the FSU [former Soviet Union] countries”, including the fact that most of the countries operate a visa-free zone for these citizens.³⁵ Their analysis therefore seems to bear out Kosachev’s view that ordinary people view the countries of the CIS as interlinked and take advantage of the common cultural and historical space to transcend national borders. It is hard to say whether, as Libman and Vinogorov tentatively conclude, this is a precursor to deeper overall integration, therefore providing a different model of integration usually observed or expected, or whether it is merely a legacy of former links. However, it is on the foundations of such interactions that Russian policy makers have sought to build, particularly in promoting Russian culture and highlighting the economic dependence of countries of the former Soviet Union on Russia.

For example, in his speech to the Federal Assembly in 2008, President Medvedev pinpointed the fact that Russia is an economic magnet for the region, and urged adoption of the rouble as the regional currency of choice. To provide a stronger base in the long term, both Putin and Medvedev have focused on reversing Russia’s population decline, but also making

32 Libman and Vinokurov, above n 30, at 117.

33 Libman, above n 27.

34 Libman and Vinokurov, above n 30, at 124-125.

35 Ibid, at 119-120 and 125.

Russia a destination for skilled migrant workers.³⁶ The Russian authorities have also sought to make Russian language and culture more prominent internationally, including emphasising the ties between Russia and Russian speakers abroad. In his 2007 annual address, Putin praised measures to promote the Russian language in the former Soviet space to reinforce its status as the *lingua franca* of the region, as well as worldwide.³⁷ Similarly, Russian policy makers have promoted the idea of Slavic universities teaching in Russian, and aim to get Russian recognised as a second official state language in former Soviet republics.³⁸ In line with these priorities, officially sanctioned groups such as the World Congress of Russian Compatriots Living Abroad are promoting links between Russia and the ethnic Russian diaspora.³⁹

As Andrei Tsygankov argues, such measures should not be considered neo-imperialism as some sceptical analysts have perceived them to be: they form part of the array of public diplomacy that most states engage in.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the perception that Russia was an imperial power in its tsarist and Soviet guises makes many inhabitants of former Soviet states suspicious of Russian attempts to promote Russian culture in the post-Soviet space. On the one hand, Libman points out that Russian is still the *lingua franca* across the post-Soviet space, even in groupings such as GUAM of which Russia is not a member.⁴¹ On the other hand, this does not necessarily mean that it is perceived as the basis for close bonds, and in some cases considerable efforts have been made to distance former Soviet republics from Russian language. In post-Soviet Ukraine, for example, early language policy was designed to de-Russify and to strengthen the separate identity of Ukrainian; and we also cannot ignore the “narcissism of small differences”, the fact that “the fiercest struggles often take place between individuals, groups and communities that differ very little”.⁴² Furthermore, Russian policies of promoting ties between Russia and its diaspora also fuels suspicions that Russian minorities are a “fifth column.” Overall, then, culture as a basis for integration depends on

36 In his 2009 annual address to the Federal Assembly, Medvedev also talked of ways to attract back skilled Russian émigrés; Dmitrii Medvedev “Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation” (12 November 2009) President of Russia <eng.kremlin.ru>.

37 Vladimir Putin, “Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation” (26 April 2007) President of Russia <eng.kremlin.ru>.

38 Andrei P Tsygankov “If Not by Tanks, then by Banks? The Role of Soft Power in Putin’s Foreign Policy” (2006) 58 *Europe-Asia Studies* 1079.

39 Alexander Chepurin “Approaching the Far Away: Russian Policy Towards Russian Communities Abroad” (2009) 3 *Russia in Global Affairs* 68. See also Konstantin Kosachev “The Specifics of Russian Soft Power” (2012) 3 *Russia in Global Affairs* [no page numbers]. Kosachev is now the Head of Rossotrudnichestvo, the Russian Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation.

40 Tsygankov, above n 38.

41 Libman, above n 27, at 405.

42 Anton Blok “The Narcissism of Minor Differences” (1998) 1 *European Journal of Social Theory* 33 at 33.

the perceptions of the history of relations and the politics of identity; across Russia's "near abroad," these circumstances are often not propitious for integration focused on the Russian Federation.

C. Russia's "Arc of Instability"

We have seen that the "near abroad" is considered by Russian policy makers as the natural area for regional integration involving Russia. Yet, as well as being a region of opportunity, it is also considered a potential source of threats. The region of most security concern to Russia is the "southern tier" of the Caucasus and Central Asia, with its remote territory and porous borders. Here, "new" security threats are considered serious challenges to peace and security: transnational crime, drug trafficking, people trafficking, environmental devastation, ethnic conflict, failed statehood and terrorism. The latter concern is closely tied to the conflict in Chechnya, which Russian policymakers have depicted as part of a wider movement of international terrorism and religious extremism threatening the "civilised" world. It was in this context that, at the G8 summit in July 2000, Putin warned that "a certain arc of instability is now showing in the world extending in our opinion from the Philippines to Kosovo with its centre gradually shifting to Afghanistan".⁴³

The phrase "arc of instability" was subsequently used by Putin to position Russia with the United States in the so-called "war on terrorism." However, it contradicts the notion discussed above of the "near abroad" as a region of common culture and natural integration since it posits an essential difference between the developed state and the weak developing countries in its neighbourhood. In his address to the Federal Assembly in April 2005, Putin declared that Russia "should continue its civilising mission on the Eurasian continent", presenting Russia as upholder of European values and the bearer of European statehood which it should bring to the countries to its south.⁴⁴ This implies that Russia is in some way superior to the countries of the "arc of instability", while elsewhere his references to "European civilisation" suggest that in relation to the non-European parts of the "near abroad", Russia has a role as the spreader of European values and practices. This mission includes maintaining stability and helping to secure statehood (preventing states failing) – perhaps through peace-keeping and other forms of assistance, but also through intervention if a state is not fulfilling its duties to maintain stability (if, for example, it is wittingly or unwittingly harbouring terrorists). Clearly, this is likely to raise charges of neo-imperialism.

43 James Headley "War on Terror or Pretext for Power? Putin, Chechnya, and the 'Terrorist International'" (2005) 1 *Australasian Journal of Human Security* 13 at 17. Putin may well have been echoing Zbigniew Brzezinski who in 1978 had described the "southern tier" below the Soviet Union, spreading from Egypt to Pakistan, as an "arc of crisis"; Jon Fraenkel "South-West Pacific: Arc of Instability or Matrix of Discontent?" in Ralph Pettman (ed) *New Zealand in a Globalising World* (Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2005) 119 at 120.

44 Putin, above n 14.

This means that while there has been a re-orientation towards seeing Russia as part of a region – the former Soviet space, Russia’s “near abroad” – Russia is also “apart” from it, identified with it, but distinguished from it. This shows that a shift of focus from global concerns to the immediate neighbourhood is not necessarily one of identification with the region and a foundation for mutual cooperation and integration. Rather, in this respect, the region is conceptualised in terms of interconnected security threats. Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver refer to this as a “regional security complex” which they define as “a set of units whose major processes of securitisation, desecuritisation, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another”.⁴⁵ They posit that the central idea in Regional Security Complex Theory is that, “since most threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones, security independence is normally patterned into regionally based clusters: security complexes”.⁴⁶ This is not necessarily a new phenomenon. In fact, the concept of a Russian “Monroe Doctrine” is perhaps more appropriate in relation to this security discourse than to the “near abroad” integrationist rhetoric and reminds us that it is not the first time that a hegemonic state has claimed a right/duty to intervene in its neighbourhood in response to instances of instability or state weakness.

III. NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIAN CONCEPTIONS OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC

A. Do New Zealand and Australia have “Near Abroads”?

The Russian phrase “near abroad” has found its way into analyses of the foreign policies of other states, including those of New Zealand and Australia.⁴⁷ But is it transferable to those locations? We have seen that the term has a geographical component: “near” partly means geographically proximate. This is how Derek McDougall uses it:⁴⁸

45 Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003) at 44. They further define “securitisation” as “the discursive process through which an intersubjective understanding is constructed within a political community to treat something as an existential threat to a valued referent object, and to enable a call for urgent and exceptional measures to deal with the threat”; at 490.

46 At 4.

47 For example, Terence O’Brien “Facing the Challenge of New Zealand’s Near Abroad” (2010) 35 *New Zealand International Review* 21; Derek McDougall “Australia’s Engagement with its ‘Near Abroad’: A Change of Direction under the Labour Government, 2007 – 10?” (2011) 49 *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 318. For an example relating to the EU, see Thomas Christiansen, Fabio Petito and Ben Tonra “Fuzzy Politics Around Fuzzy Borders: The European Union’s ‘Near Abroad’” (2000) 35 *Cooperation and Conflict* 389.

48 McDougall, above n 47, at 318.

Although the term “near abroad” is most commonly used to describe Russia’s relations with neighbouring post-Soviet states, here it refers to the island and archipelagic countries to Australia’s northeast, north and northwest, most particularly the independent states of the Southwest Pacific (Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Fiji), East Timor and eastern Indonesia (including West Papua).

It is interesting that McDougall does not include New Zealand in Australia’s “near abroad.” This is because McDougall approaches it from the perspective of security, so he immediately goes on to state that “[h]istorically, much of the Australian preoccupation with its ‘near abroad’ has focused on security concerns relating to the way in which instability in this region might affect Australia itself”⁴⁹ I discuss the implications of this security perspective in more detail below; but we can see already that this conception neglects cultural and political affinities which might form the basis of integration whereas, taking such elements into account, New Zealand would have to be considered the “closest” country to Australia.

In contrast, Terence O’Brien incorporates a historical and cultural component into his understanding of the term in the New Zealand context. Although he does not list the countries of New Zealand’s “near abroad,” he identifies it as the South Pacific and begins by explaining why this region is important to New Zealand.⁵⁰

The obvious explanation lies first and foremost in the iron law of near-by geography, in traditional connections of politics, economics, commerce, culture, ethnicity, history and religion; and most obviously in New Zealand’s overall national interest in co-existing within a friendly, well-disposed, prosperous neighbourhood.

O’Brien’s approach, then, is a closer match to the Russian conception, since it brings in elements besides geography that tie New Zealand to the perceived region. This lays the foundation for a more nuanced understanding of the potential for regional integration which also echoes the Russian context. The comparison with Russia is not exact, of course: New Zealand and other South Pacific states did not emerge suddenly from a common state with new land borders where there had only been administrative boundaries before. Several of the Pacific Island countries (PICs – the Pacific Islands Forum countries excluding New Zealand and Australia) emerged from a common empire (the British), but they did so later than New Zealand and Australia and had a different relationship with Britain than those settler societies. Insofar as past incorporation in the British Empire does shape current political and economic relationships, it is through the wider institution of the Commonwealth rather than an institution specific to the Pacific, but the Commonwealth (like its Russian counterpart) has much reduced economic and political significance today.

A more fruitful way of examining the relationship is therefore in terms of New Zealand and Australia’s own direct historical ties with particular states in the Pacific. Analysts have revealingly different ways of describing

49 At 318.

50 O’Brien, above n 47, at 21.

this relationship, resulting in differing interpretations of its implications. For example, O'Brien suggests that New Zealand has a sense of obligation "especially with regard to Pacific Polynesia since [it] was the colonial administrator of Samoa, the Cooks, Niue and Tokelau. It was responsible for their conduct towards self-government."⁵¹ In contrast, Ian Frazer and Jenny Bryant-Tokelau refer to New Zealand and Australia categorically as among the "six colonial powers with territories in the Pacific" (the others being Britain, France, the Netherlands and the United States of America).⁵² They base their analysis of South Pacific regionalism on the distinction between "metropolitan powers" (Australia and New Zealand) and the "island countries," arguing that the common policy agreement between Australia and New Zealand demonstrates why "the metropolitan/islands distinction is still so important in trying to understand Pacific regionalism".⁵³

However, the difference between these approaches is more one of emphasis than of substance, and combined they show that Australia and New Zealand have historical colonial ties with particular countries in the Pacific. As with Russia's "near abroad," in some respects those ties lay the basis for close cooperation, while in other respects they lay the basis for divergent interests/policies and may provoke tensions. On the one hand, for example, a legacy of Samoa's history as a New Zealand dependency is the rights that Samoans enjoy to New Zealand residency. Furthermore, the fact that New Zealand actively promoted decolonisation after World War II – New Zealand was instrumental in setting up the Trusteeship Committee of the United Nations at the San Francisco conference in 1945 and encouraged its own trustees to move towards independence – gives it a more positive image than some other former colonial powers enjoy.

On the other hand, resentment remains in Samoa, for example, over New Zealand's failure to prevent the spread of the flu epidemic in 1918 (which led to the deaths of over 20 per cent of the population) and the violent suppression of the Mau movement in the 1920s, including the shootings in Apia in December 1929 of non-violent protestors by New Zealand police.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, Prime Minister Helen Clark's apology in 2002 went some way towards allowing a reconciliation. Clark referred to the "inept and incompetent early administration of Samoa by New Zealand" and went on to declare:⁵⁵

51 At 21.

52 Ian Frazer and Jenny Bryant-Tokalau "Introduction: The Uncertain Future of Pacific Regionalism" in Jenny Bryant-Tokalau and Ian Frazer (eds) *Redefining the Pacific? Regionalism Past, Present and Future* (Ashgate, Aldershot, 2006) 1 at 5. Australia was the main colonial power in Papua New Guinea during most of the 20th century until PNG gained independence in 1975.

53 At 21.

54 This is comparable with the on-going resentment in some former Soviet republics over past injustices carried out by the Soviet Union or the Russian empire, such as of the famine in Ukraine in the 1930s which many consider to have been a genocide.

55 "Full text: Helen Clark's Apology to Samoa" *The New Zealand Herald* (online ed, Auckland, 4 June 2002).

On behalf of the New Zealand Government, I wish to offer today a formal apology to the people of Samoa for the injustices arising from New Zealand's administration of Samoa in its earlier years, and to express sorrow and regret for those injustices.

It is our hope that this apology will enable us to build an even stronger relationship and friendship for the future on the basis of a firmer foundation. New Zealand and Samoa are bound together by our geography, our history, our cultural and family links, and today by our trade and diplomacy.

Helen Clark's explanation of why New Zealand and Samoa are bound together reflects the shift in thinking in New Zealand policy that has occurred over the past few decades. Historically, New Zealand identified itself with the British Empire and then the Commonwealth. It fought alongside Great Britain in its colonial wars and in both World Wars; and, after the advent of refrigerated containers in the late 19th century, its trade was centred on Great Britain. New Zealand was in many respects an outpost of Great Britain on the other side of the world. Gradually, however, New Zealand developed a more independent foreign policy: it opposed appeasement in the 1930s and was also an enthusiastic backer of the League of Nations and, after the Second World War, of the United Nations. The Second World War demonstrated the inability of Great Britain to protect its allies in the Pacific, and New Zealand instead shifted to relying on the United States for protection, as well as allying closely with Australia through the ANZAC pact. With the onset of the Cold War, this security arrangement was formalised through the creation of the ANZUS alliance in 1951. But this orientation was not purely for self-defence: it reflected the belief that, as a liberal democracy, New Zealand was part of the "West," that its natural allies were other liberal democracies, and that it had to support those natural allies in the global Cold War. This was demonstrated by the deployment of troops in Korea and then in Vietnam.

New Zealand's commitment to supporting the United States in Vietnam was entered reluctantly by the Prime Minister Holyoake (although supported by the Ministry of External Affairs) and, as in other countries, was met with widespread public protests. This burgeoning peace movement was linked also to protests against nuclear testing in the Pacific. New Zealand took France to the World Court in 1973, showing that concerns over the environment and over the nuclear threat could overcome Cold War alliances. At the same time, a strong indigenous rights movement emerged within New Zealand. The Māori revival revealed strong resentments at the way that Māori had been marginalised; the attempt to compensate for wrongs committed against Māori land claims through the Waitangi Tribunal was one official response. Divisions over ethnic relations were highlighted also through the controversies over tours of New Zealand by the Springboks, and tours of South Africa by the All Blacks. During the 1970s, New Zealand was also diversifying in trade, especially as the United Kingdom moved towards membership of the European Economic Community.

All of these factors meant that New Zealand's approach to the outside world was changing, and there were deep divisions within New Zealand society over these matters. When the fourth Labour government came to

power in 1984 under Prime Minister David Lange, New Zealand entered a period of rapid and dramatic change. The government instituted a radical neo-liberal agenda of privatisation and the aggressive promotion of free trade (which involved the removal of tariffs and subsidies and a range of import/export controls). Partly as an attempt to placate traditional Labour Party members and voters, the government also implemented a nuclear-free policy which had major repercussions for its security orientation: when a request for the *USS Buchanan* to visit New Zealand was turned down after the United States government refused to “confirm or deny” the presence of nuclear weapons, the United States withdrew its security commitments to New Zealand, effectively ending the ANZUS alliance. The nuclear-free policy was entrenched through the 1987 Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament and Arms Control Act, and New Zealand also played an important role in the creation of the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone in August 1985.

These changes signified more than merely a change of policy approach: they encapsulated a gradual reorientation which included a reassessment of New Zealand’s cultural identity, its geopolitical position and its understanding of security.⁵⁶ There was also a shifting sense of identity linked to ideas about New Zealand’s place in the world and the nature of its own society. While still being perceived as part of the “West” (on the basis of history, dominant culture and politics/economics), New Zealand was increasingly considered to be a “South Pacific” nation. With the Māori revival, New Zealand/Aotearoa became more of a bi-cultural society, and its Pacific orientation was strengthened also by increased immigration from the Pacific Islands.

The overall shift in New Zealand foreign policy thinking is comparable to the shift in Russian foreign policy thinking from global ideology of the Cold War to a focus on geographical and cultural region. In contrast, Australia has not undergone such a clear reorientation, because of its different geographical position and its weaker historical ties with Pacific Island countries (relations are close with Indonesia and Papua New Guinea in some policy areas) and because of its different demography. As O’Brien puts it:⁵⁷

Given our geography and the very numbers of our population with Pacific and Polynesian heritage, it seems logical that New Zealand would the more readily identify itself as being of the South Pacific [whereas] ... given the realities of its geography, its sheer critical mass, its wider range of international interests and its economic potential ... [Australia] would the more readily assume a metropolitan position in its relationship with the Pacific Islands region.

Similarly, Frazer and Bryant-Tokalau state that “there are major differences between them in how they see their place in the Pacific”, and suggest that “New Zealand has a much better reputation among Pacific countries than

56 Dick Gentles “New Zealand Defence Policy: Has It Been Transformed?” (2005) 30 *New Zealand International Review* 7.

57 O’Brien, above n 47, at 21.

Australia [and] is less ambivalent about being a Pacific country, having accepted that for many years"; furthermore, its policies on immigration and in its flexible relations with Niue and the Cook Islands mean that it has "a much more favourable reputation among Pacific countries" than Australia.⁵⁸

B. Is the South Pacific a Region of Integration?

Nevertheless, New Zealand is still not unambiguously "of" as well as "in" the South Pacific.⁵⁹ The fact that New Zealand is the former colonial power in relation to several of the countries of the region, added to the fact that, like Australia, it is a settler society and therefore culturally distinct, creates a distance which is increased by its relative economic strength and the consequent power imbalance. Furthermore, in many respects New Zealand and Australia are closely aligned in their Pacific policies, especially as Australia has paid more attention to the South Pacific over the past two decades.⁶⁰ According to Frazer and Bryant-Tokalau:⁶¹

In all the big initiatives that have been taken since the 1990s, such as reforming regional organisations, promoting liberal economic policies, pushing closer regional integration, the two metropolitan countries have been largely in agreement with each other.

Not only have they been in agreement, but they have forced an agenda onto often reluctant Pacific Island countries, and set policies for those countries to implement which do not apply to themselves. This is particularly the case with the Pacific Plan, first endorsed at the 2005 leaders meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum but considered a "living document."⁶² It promotes economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security through regional cooperation and integration.⁶³ But, as O'Brien observes:⁶⁴

It marked ... a final word on the matter of New Zealand identity. This was, and is, not a plan that applies formally to New Zealand itself – it signals effectively that although New Zealand is *in* the South Pacific, it is not *of* the South Pacific. The prescriptions are not intended to apply to the metropolitans – New Zealand or Australia – which are the authors to all intents and purposes of a detailed, intricate, bureaucratic blueprint for good governance ... to be applied in the South Pacific.

In this respect, it is comparable to the European Union's approach in its neighbourhood (and also further afield, including in the Pacific) which has also come under criticism from some commentators; for example, Christopher

58 Frazer and Bryant-Tokalau, above n 52, at 21.

59 O'Brien, above n 47, at 21.

60 Ibid.

61 Frazer and Bryant-Tokalau, above n 52, at 21.

62 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat "The Pacific Plan" <forumsec.org>.

63 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat "The Pacific Plan for Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration" (rev. version, October 2007) at 2.

64 O'Brien, above n 47, at 24.

Browning describes the EU's promotion of regional integration projects as "Europeanising' civilising missions".⁶⁵ Without using this phrase, O'Brien echoes these doubts when he describes the Pacific Plan as:⁶⁶

... a fastidious and intrusive approach that appears to empower bureaucrats – in the Forum Secretariat as well as in Australia and New Zealand – to intervene in the region in the name of good governance through ways that seemingly contradict Pacific Islands region sovereignty.

The problem with programmes that might be perceived to diminish sovereignty is that, as in the former Soviet space, states want to preserve their relatively recently won independence, particularly vis-à-vis the former colonial power. This means that Pacific Island states may resist integration or pursue it without the metropolitan powers. There is evidence of both of these tendencies. For example, the Pacific Plan may be a bold blueprint on paper, but the rhetoric has not been matched in practice.⁶⁷ Elise Huffer argues that the Pacific Plan "gives the impression of being too ambitious in scope but not sufficiently so in terms of building a political project based on a common Pacific cultural identity"; and she suggests that "[a]s it stands the Plan appears to be mainly a tool for integration by free trade".⁶⁸ In this regard, there are some concerns among Pacific Island countries about the way in which the free trade agenda is being promoted by Australia and New Zealand, especially as they have leverage because the PICs are dependent on them for aid. In particular, there is scepticism about the nature, timing and process of the proposed Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus (PACER-Plus) Agreement which is intended to extend the 2003 PICTA free trade in goods agreement between the Pacific Island countries to include New Zealand and Australia.⁶⁹ It will effectively remove the non-reciprocal market access to New Zealand and Australia that the Pacific Island countries benefit from through the South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement (SPARTECA) of 1981.

65 Christopher Browning "The Region-Building Approach Revisited: The Continued Othering of Russia in Discourses of Region-Building in the European North" (2003) 8 *Geopolitics* 45 at 61; see also Sergei Medvedev "The Stalemate in EU–Russia Relations: Between 'Sovereignty' and 'Europeanisation'" in Ted Hopf (ed) *Russia's European Choice* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2008) 215.

66 O'Brien, above n 47, at 24.

67 Shennia Spillane "The Pacific Plan 2006-15: Legal Implications for Regionalism" in Kennedy Graham (ed) *Models of Regional Governance for the Pacific: Sovereignty and the Future Architecture of Regionalism* (Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, 2008) 72 at 82.

68 Elise Huffer "The Pacific Plan: A Political and Cultural Critique" in Bryant-Tokalau and Frazer, above n 52, at 174, 172.

69 Jane Kelsey "Big Brothers Behaving Badly: The Implications for the Pacific Islands of the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER)" (Pacific Network on Globalisation, Suva, 2004); Maureen Penjueli and Wesley Morgan "Speaking Truth to Power: Australian and New Zealand use of power politics to launch Pacific free trade negotiations" (Pacific Network on Globalisation, Suva, 2009); Council for International Development "PACER Plus Fact Sheet 8" (July 2012) <cid.org.nz>.

The disparity between the island states and their larger southern neighbours, then, is an obstacle to integration across the South Pacific as a whole. In fact, despite these projects of regional economic integration, as in the former Soviet space, in the South Pacific political and economic integration is closest between two countries – Australia and New Zealand – especially through the Closer Economic Relations (CER) process.⁷⁰ On the other hand, “sub-regionalism” through the Melanesian Spearhead Group or the Polynesian Leaders Group may be a means for the Pacific Island countries to bypass the metropolitan powers, while they could also reach out to other powerful countries such as China, Japan or even Russia.⁷¹ Integration processes have also been institutionalised through the wider grouping of the Asia-Pacific Economic Conference (APEC), while an alternative integration region is envisaged in the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade area. These wider cross-cutting integrations and the nested integrations inside the South Pacific region remind us that the concept of the “South Pacific” is itself constructed and only one of a number of potential regions of integration.⁷²

Despite the reluctance of governments in the South Pacific to implement declared regionalist intentions, there is growing regionalisation as in the former Soviet space. However, probably even more than is the case in respect of Russia in the former Soviet region, such links are disproportionately focused on the stronger economic powers of New Zealand and Australia. In trade in goods, this relationship is quite asymmetrical: for example, in 2009, New Zealand merchandise exports to the Pacific Island countries were valued at NZ\$820.3 million, whereas imports from Pacific Island countries were only NZ\$112.6 million.⁷³ According to an Oxfam report of 2009, PIC imports from Australia and New Zealand outweigh exports to them by a factor of nearly six to one, and those exports are dominated by crude oil and mineral resources from Papua New Guinea.⁷⁴ The report suggests that the limited access to New Zealand and Australian markets is partly because of distance from markets and poor transport and other infrastructure;⁷⁵ in this respect, the maritime geography is an impediment to intra-regional trade as a whole, in contrast to the former Soviet space.

70 See John Leslie and Annmarie Elijah “Does N = 2? Trans-Tasman Economic Integration as a Comparator for the Single European Market” (2012) 50 *Journal of Common Market Studies* 975.

71 Jian Yang “China in Fiji: Displacing Traditional Players” (2011) 65 *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 305; “Fiji Plans Closer Ties with Russia under ‘Look North’ Policy” (6 February 2011) BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific.

72 For a diagram showing the cross-cutting trade agreements – current and under negotiation – involving PICs, see Nick Braxton “PACER Plus and its Alternatives: Which way for trade and development in the Pacific?” (Oxfam New Zealand and Oxfam Australia, Auckland/Carlton, 2009) at 6.

73 Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade “Key Pacific Issues: Trade” <mfat.govt.nz>. The MFAT website points out, however, that this trade imbalance in goods is partly counteracted by service provision in the form of tourism by the Pacific Island countries.

74 Braxton, above n 72, at 10.

75 At 11.

On the other hand there is significant migration to Australia and New Zealand from Pacific Island countries both for employment and education – just as there has been to Russia from former Soviet republics since its economic revival. Yet, unlike in the post-Soviet case, migration is low between the Pacific Island countries, suggesting limited regionalisation across the region as a whole. This is partly because of different geography and because the countries were not historically entities within a common state, but also because of reluctance on the part of the countries to open up their borders to migrants. This applies also to New Zealand and Australia which, while promoting free movement of goods, services and capital in the South Pacific, are less willing to promote completely free movement of people.⁷⁶

The demographic situation is different in a significant respect from the former Soviet space: there is no substantial New Zealand/Australia diaspora comparable to the large Russian diaspora in many of the post-Soviet republics. This means there is no equivalent suspicion of such minority populations as “fifth columns” or fears of how they might be used by the metropolitan state to further its own interests. There are also not the complications of language politics: there seems little concern about the use of English as the medium of communication in the Pacific Islands Forum, for example. And while the lack of a New Zealand/Australian diaspora removes one source of cultural connection, the large Pacific Island country diaspora population – particularly Polynesians in New Zealand – does encourage cultural ties between the metropolitan states and the island countries which can contribute towards a sense of regional identity including the former.⁷⁷

Furthermore, as Jian Yang argues, the common Christian tradition in the region may provide a natural basis for a sense of identity in the South Pacific as a whole, counteracting any political moves to align more with Southeast Asia or China, for example.⁷⁸ While, as suggested above, New Zealand’s and Australia’s nature as settler societies may put cultural distance between them and the Pacific Island countries, ties may be developing between indigenous peoples of the settler societies and their Pacific Island neighbours drawing on historic links.⁷⁹ Although this might be interpreted as a challenge to official policy run through the Ministry/Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, it could also complement integrationist measures. For example, some Māori iwi representatives recently attended the first formal meeting of the Polynesian Leaders Group and expressed an interest in joining. According to

76 Michael Powles “Pacific Regionalism: Perspectives on the Pacific Plan” in Bryant-Tokalau and Frazer, above n 52, at 44.

77 Alumita L Durutalo “Pacific Islands Diaspora Groups and Foreign Policy” in James Headley, Andreas Reitzig and Joe Burton (eds) *Public Participation in Foreign Policy* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2012) 213.

78 Jian Yang “China in the South Pacific: Hegemon on the Horizon?” (2009) 22 *Pacific Review* 139 at 148.

79 Maria Bargh “Rights and Sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples: Implications for Foreign Policy” in Headley et al, above n 77, at 173.

Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu kaiwhakahaere (chairperson) Mark Solomon, iwi want to rekindle their relationship with Pacific whanaunga, and joining the group could also increase business opportunities.⁸⁰

C. South Pacific “Arc of Instability”

We have seen that New Zealand and Australia’s programme for regional integration may come up against the desire of island states to preserve their sovereignty; but in the security sphere, the metropolitan states’ more interventionist approach is itself a response to the perceived weakness of those states. Beyond promoting good governance, neo-liberal economics and regional integration, Australia and New Zealand have, since the end of the 1990s, pursued a security agenda through the Pacific Islands Forum aimed at coordinating responses to “new” or “non-traditional” security threats. The Biketawa declaration of 2000 and its subsequent application through the Regional Assistance Mission in the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) are well-discussed evidence of this, but security threats still remain high on the agenda today. For example, regional security was a major focus of the Pacific Islands Forum leaders meeting in Rarotonga in August 2012 in the context of renewed concerns about international crime in the region.⁸¹

Thus, the idea that the weak states of the South Pacific could constitute a security threat to the developed states of New Zealand and Australia is a feature of the post-Cold War era.⁸² As with the Russian case, the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 added urgency to a “securitising” agenda that was already developing. One feature of this agenda, in the wake of the coups in Fiji, the crisis in the Solomon Islands, and the Bali bombings, is the use of the term “arc of instability” by many Australian academics, media commentators and policymakers to refer to a region spreading from Indonesia across Melanesia to Polynesia (the inclusion of Indonesia within the “arc of instability” indicates that it is not the same region as the region of integration – the South Pacific – but is Australia’s “northern tier”).⁸³

As we have seen, a similar discourse emerged in Russia at around the same time in relation to its “southern tier.” It should be noted, however, that there is a clear contrast in the geography of these two supposed “arcs of instability,” just

80 Radio New Zealand News “Iwi seek to join Pacific Islands Forum group” (30 August 2012) <radionz.co.nz/news>; Pacific Scoop “Polynesian Leaders consider welcoming Māori, Hawai’i, Rapa Nui into group” (27 August 2012) <scoop.co.nz>.

81 In covering the meeting, the New Zealand broadcaster TVNZ ran a special report on the evening news investigating arms, drugs and people trafficking in the South Pacific by international crime syndicates. In the report, Australia’s Federal Police Head of Serious Organised Crime, Commissioner David Sharpe, said that “organised crime syndicates do prey on countries that don’t have the strong infrastructure that, say, the more developed nations do. To target organised crime, it’s all about partnership.” ONE News “Concern Pacific Being Used as Illegal Activity Highway” (29 August 2012) TVNZ <tvnz.co.nz/world-news>.

82 McDougall, above n 47, at 320.

83 For examples and analysis, see Fraenkel, above n 43.

as we saw above that there is a contrast in terms of former interconnectedness within a land-based empire as compared to a maritime empire. In the Eurasian case, “new” security threats are considered problematic because of long, porous land borders which are often mountainous and usually remote and therefore difficult to patrol; while in the case of the South Pacific, there are large expanses of ocean between states which might be expected to provide a buffer.⁸⁴ However, this maritime environment is also difficult for states to control.⁸⁵ So in fact the problem of weak states being unable to prevent illegal activity within their borders (or their wider exclusive economic zones) is common to both contexts, and the vast expanses of water do not necessarily act as insulators from security threats.

Nevertheless, as with the Russian case, there are significant problems with the South Pacific “arc of instability” discourse. For example, crises in Fiji and the Solomon Islands may bear a certain resemblance, but they arise from different contexts, while separatism in Aceh did not necessarily derive from similar causes as separatism in Bougainville, for example. Furthermore, the idea of an “arc of instability” is built on the notion of the South Pacific being a region of “weak,” “failing” or “failed” states. This notion is itself simplistic, as it merges together disparate problems under one coarse label.⁸⁶ For example, some analysts have written about the “Africanisation” of the South Pacific, identifying similar problems in both regions.⁸⁷ But, while there are some rich comparative insights to be gained by analysing post-colonial situations across the world, there is a danger of losing understanding of the specific dynamics of particular countries or regions.

Furthermore, exponents of the idea of “failed” or “failing” states often neglect to address the fact that many states labelled as such are relatively new, and have not existed as independent states in the past.⁸⁸ Regional intervention in “weak” states may itself actually prevent the development of stable

84 I would like to thank Marit Moe for pointing this out.

85 For example, the TVNZ report quoted above n 81 noted that criminal groups use the South Pacific as a staging post, transferring illegal goods from their “mother ships” to smaller vessels which are hard to detect or appear innocent.

86 Gerard Finin and Terence Wesley-Smith *Coups, Conflicts, and Crises: The New Pacific Way?* (Pacific Islands Development Series 13, East-West Center Working Papers, Honolulu); Terence Wesley-Smith “There Goes the Neighbourhood: The Politics of Failed States and Regional Intervention in the Pacific” in Bryant-Tokalau and Frazer, above n 52, at 122.

87 For example, Ben Reilly “The Africanisation of the South Pacific” (2000) 54 *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 261; for a thorough critique, see Jon Fraenkel “The Coming Anarchy in Oceania? A Critique of the ‘Africanisation’ of the South Pacific Thesis” (2004) 42 *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 1.

88 For sustained critiques of the notion of “failed states”, see Pinar Bilgin and Adam David Morton “Historicising Representations of ‘Failed States’: Beyond the Cold-War Annexation of the Social Sciences?” (2002) 23 *Third World Quarterly* 55; Stein Sundstøl Eriksen “State Failure’ in Theory and Practice: The Idea of the State and the Contradictions of State Formation” (2011) 37 *Review of International Studies* 229; Mark T Berger “From Nation-Building to State-Building: The Geopolitics of Development, the Nation-State System and the Changing Global Order” (2006) 27 *Third World Quarterly* 5.

sovereign statehood in these new states.⁸⁹ In addition, the incorporation of all areas of the world into the so-called global “war on terrorism” neglects the fact that there is little evidence of international terrorist threat in the South Pacific, while the policies that states are expected to implement in response to the perceived threat may place additional burdens on fragile economies and societies and therefore actually be counterproductive.⁹⁰ These approaches do, however, strengthen an “us” and “them” dichotomy, and serve to legitimise an interventionist policy which depends on high military spending.⁹¹ And, as with the Russian case, the assumption of a role of spreading stable European statehood raises concerns of neo-imperialism and reinforces the sense of New Zealand and Australia being apart from, rather than a part of, the South Pacific. This is especially because, as with ASEAN, where there are common norms of non-interference in internal affairs and respect for sovereignty – so-called “Asian values” – so among the Pacific Island countries there are norms of mutual respect and dialogue, often referred to as the “Pacific Way”.⁹²

IV. CONCLUSION

In his analysis of New Zealand foreign policy discourse quoted in the introduction above, Simon Dalby writes of the “geopolitical reasoning” that dominated in the Cold War:⁹³

Specific descriptions of places are constructed in ways that legitimise particular narratives and hence policy actions. But to accomplish this in terms of threats to security and the necessity to mobilise populations for war usually requires that the complex social entities of a particular place are rhetorically reduced to a simple stereotype. Only by squeezing complexity and contingency out of geopolitical designations can threats be rendered unambiguous and military action taken against an antagonist portrayed as a threat. The irony of geopolitics is that it is so often anti-geographical.

The same could be said of the new geopolitics of security. The rhetoric of “non-traditional” security threats, especially terrorism, emanating from “failed states” and encapsulated in the notion of an “arc of instability” is therefore reminiscent of the dominant Cold War paradigm in which local conflicts were interpreted as battles in the global war between communism and capitalist democracy, thus justifying military intervention.

This goes against the cultural and geographic concept of the region encapsulated in the term “near abroad,” which sees the region as an area of opportunity and potential for integration, and the metropolitan power as part of, not apart from, its neighbourhood. I have argued that the notion of a “near abroad” is used in Russian rhetoric to promote reintegration in the

89 O’Brien, above n 47, at 25; Shahar Hameiri “The Region Within: RAMSI, the Pacific Plan and New Modes of Governance in the Southwest Pacific” (2009) 63 *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 348

90 O’Brien, above n 47, at 25.

91 An example is Kim C Beazley “Arc of Instability” (2003) 57 *National Observer* 17.

92 Huffer, above n 68.

93 Dalby, above n 1, at 440.

post-Soviet space. Although the phrase has been used elsewhere, it is not fully equivalent in the case of the South Pacific in respect to New Zealand and Australia because the region was not formerly an integrated state. Nevertheless, particularly for New Zealand, similar thinking does lie behind the orientation towards the South Pacific and the idea that the countries of the region share a common history, culture and economic interconnectedness that can lay the basis for further integration. However, as with the Russian example, there are limits posed by the perception among Pacific Island states of New Zealand and Australia as former colonial powers and potential hegemony which might act as a brake on integration.

There are also tensions between the idea of commonality as providing a basis of integration, and the discourse of new security threats which, while it may be used to underpin the coordination of security policy widely construed, is built on a distinction between developed and developing countries. It may therefore contribute to alienation of Pacific Island countries and cause long-term problems in their relationships with New Zealand and Australia. These processes might encourage integration without the metropolitan powers (sub-regionalism) or extra-regional integration within the wider Pacific. Indeed, the very notion of “sub-regionalism” is problematic since it accords the South Pacific ontological primacy, and poses the danger of reifying it, in the same way that we saw Russian politicians falling back on the supposedly objective existence of a post-Soviet region. Of course, in constructing the idea of the neighbourhood as a potential for threats and for integration processes, New Zealand and Australia also may look further afield towards Asia in response to changing economic and demographic patterns. This too reminds us that regions are constructed and continuously in flux.

The relationships of Russia to its “near abroad” and New Zealand/Australia to the South Pacific are in many respects quite different given the very different contexts (geographical, historical, economic and so on). Nevertheless, comparing them brings to light important conceptual and theoretical questions about the role of culture, geography, history, economics and perceptions in constructing regions, as well as more empirical questions about the dynamics and interrelationship of regionalism and regionalisation. These are questions being fruitfully explored in the field of comparative regionalism.