

Chapter 1

Regional Security Architecture in the Pacific Islands Region: Rummaging through the Blueprints

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Executive Summary

The Pacific Island regional system has evolved significantly since its colonial origins to become today's robust, but complex arrangement of institutions. The historic pragmatism of this adaptive architecture has been both a factor in its success and a recurrent irritant, promoting demand for renovation. Security expectations of this architecture were important from the outset. However, a fundamental cleavage in perspectives on these security objectives appeared with decolonization in the 1970s. This chapter reviews the foundations, additions and renovations of the Pacific Island regional architecture noting that:

- States supporting regionalism from outside the region continued to emphasize traditional state security issues, while those on the inside stress development-related, human security concerns.
- The regional system is not self-funded, and its dependence on extra-regional funding is a second important driver for architectural reform.
- Re-engagement with Fiji, as a central contributor to the regional system, constitutes the major contemporary challenge for architectural reform.

Introduction

Security has been a significant factor in the Pacific Islands regional architecture since the first blueprints for its construction. It has remained the central component of every renovation and redesign since. However, the relevance of the Pacific Islands¹ to drafting these architectural sketches and blueprints has always been problematic, even in the post-colonial period.

A number of factors have contributed to this alienation of the inhabitants from the designs ostensibly intended for their benefit. A very significant influence has been the continuity of the original blueprint and its centrality to the subsequent renovations of this architecture. Another factor in the post-colonial era has been the means available to the regional countries (the “owner-occupiers” of the regional architecture) to afford some options needed for a structural makeover. Most island states do not have the domestic security infrastructure to effectively engage regionally with standard state security arrangements used by the traditional extra-regional sponsors of the Pacific Islands’ regional system.

Fundamentally, however, the key long-term factor has been a divergence in the core national interests with regard to regional security. The Islands have focused on “human” or non-traditional security over state or traditional security at the regional level. Consequently, linking the two approaches to security has proved challenging at many levels — not least at the regional level where institutional renovation has come under serious pressure to find mutually accommodating answers.

This chapter is intended as an overview of key features of the relevant regional architecture and looks at the emergence of institutions and processes that historically have established and reshaped the contemporary security architecture of the Pacific Islands region.

1 The terms “Pacific Islands” and the abbreviated forms “Island” or “Islands” are capitalized within this book to identify the region and those polities within it as distinct from other Pacific islands such as Hawai’i or Okinawa, which are islands outside this region.

The Region

Global perspectives of the Pacific Islands region often seem reduced to a rather vague awareness of a few familiar names scattered imprecisely and inaccurately across a vast expanse of blue. At best, this lack of nuance has unfortunate political consequences. Images of small states remote from major centers of power with problems that are small compared to those of other developing regions has undermined their diplomatic “relevance” internationally. At worst, this stereotype has served at times to justify heavy-handed disregard of the Islands’ interests in favor of broader, extra-regional interests by generalizing regionally from worst-case individual circumstances or events.

Scope of the South Pacific Commission from 1962

Historically, the post-1962 ambit of the South Pacific Commission (now the Pacific Community, but still known as the SPC) has defined the boundaries of the Pacific Islands region.² The value of the SPC staking out the region’s boundaries became apparent a decade later when the South Pacific Forum validated and legitimized their authenticity. The Forum decided in 1972 to regard Island polities within this sphere as its potential membership pool. This essentially confirmed the region’s scope both internally and as the region has presented itself extra-regionally.

It should be noted that the South Pacific Forum (now the Pacific Islands Forum) did not redraw its borders to include Australia and New Zealand despite their status as Forum founding members and the fact that Forum decisions apply to both countries. The region’s architecture continues to rely on the SPC ambit as the region’s core delimiter. Consequently, an “insider/outsider” ambiguity was created as to where Australia and New Zealand fit

² The historical development of these boundary issues are canvassed in some detail in: Richard Herr, “The Frontiers of Pacific Islands Regionalism: Charting the Boundaries of Identity,” *Asia Pacific World*, 4(1), Spring 2013, 36–55.

within the regional system; the spatial location of the two developed states was not an issue at the time. Increasingly, uncertainties as to which role they were playing at critical points of regional decision-making has become an architectural irritant in Pacific Islands' regionalism.

The two ANZAC countries' bifocal approach to the region remains one of the enduring challenges to regional restructuring and is often a catalyst for demands for architectural renovation.

Pacific Island Regionalism and State Security

Traditional security issues have had significant influences on the development of the regional architecture. These effects have come predominantly from outside the region and were linked to geopolitical security issues that did not directly affect the Islands. Nevertheless, changes in Western perceptions of their traditional state security interests in the Pacific Islands have profoundly shaped the structure and renovation of the regional architecture. These impacts can be seen in the following chart, which identifies them by periods in the external perceptions of security risks in or through the region.

State Security Eras of Pacific Island Regionalism

View Era	External View of Pacific Islands	Perceived Nature of risk	Regionalist Response
1944 - 1976	Security risk	Invasion route through Islands	ANZAC Pact / ANZUS
1976 - 1989	Security liability	Fear of Soviet "breakout"	"Strategic Denial"
1990 - 2001	Financial liability	"Pacific Paradox"	"Constructive Commitment"
2001 - 2011	Failed state incubator	Threat from non-state actors	Biketawa/RAMSI/"Pacific Plan"
2011 - present	Arena for geo-political rivalry	Political realignment	PIDF/ "New Framework for the Region"

The present regional system dates back to preparations for post-World War II reconstruction by Australia and New Zealand documented in their 1944 ANZAC Pact. The two allies wanted a broad regional defense commitment through collective security relationships with France, the Netherlands, United States and United Kingdom. This led ultimately to the establishment

of the South Pacific Commission in 1947, a cooperative body created to promote the welfare of the Pacific Islands people. In 1953, the ANZUS Treaty served to provide more traditional security coverage in the region for Australia, New Zealand and the United States and their territorial possessions, but was not a general treaty for regional security.³

The second of the regional security eras began in the mid-1970s when the establishment of diplomatic relations between Tonga and the Soviet Union triggered ANZUS concerns for a breach in the Western strategic policy of containment. Critical changes occurred in policy settings for the ANZUS allies. At a policy level, ANZUS took a direct interest in the regional security architecture and so informally linked state security interests of traditional sponsors of the regional system to its existing institutional arrangements. Within the region, this manifested itself through much greater financial and technical support for the Islands' human security goals as well enhanced political sensitivities to regional priorities.

The end of the Cold War led to a consequential reduction in the region's traditional security concerns. They were replaced by a decade of more critical consideration of the region's value to extra-regional interests – summed up in the World Bank's finding of a "Pacific Paradox;" it was critical of the region's high levels of aid and less-than-expected levels of economic growth. The decade did not produce any substantial renovation in the state security-related architecture, although the ANZUS linkage, already damaged by the suspension of collaboration with New Zealand through ANZUS in 1985, virtually vanished.

The Pacific Islands Forum added new wrinkles through declarations seeking to buttress Island state financial and governance capacities in the face of higher expectations of state responsibility. Moreover, there was a more "hands on" approach by Australia in managing compliance through

3 R. A. Herr, "A Child of its Era: Colonial Means and Ends." *New Guinea and Australia, the Pacific and South-East Asia*, 9(2), 1974, 2-14.

regional arrangements characterized by Australia's then Foreign Minister Gareth Evans as "constructive commitment."⁴

The economic emphasis of Western engagement with the Pacific Islands regional security architecture returned sharply to state protection in the wake of 9/11. A perception of state fragility, encapsulated in the phrase "arc of instability," drew parallels with security threats from failed or failing states to suggest that similar risks to extra-regional states might emerge from the Pacific Islands region.⁵ Coups and civil unrest, particularly in Fiji and the Solomon Islands, resulted in significant renovations to the region's state security architecture during the ensuing decade. The Biketawa Declaration and the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) went beyond "hands on" to direct intervention and included even bilateral intervention through such measures as the Enhanced Cooperation Programme by Australia with Papua New Guinea.

Whether there is a new era of geopolitical rivalry based on the heightened interest of extra-regional powers as exemplified by the American pivot to the Pacific can be debated. Nevertheless, the tone of the debate, to date, suggests there has been a shift away from the failed state imagery of the previous decade. New and established extra-regional powers are also taking a much greater interest in the region's security architecture. Elements of this argument are developed further below.

4 The importance of this is reviewed in Greg Fry, "Framing the Islands: Knowledge and Power in Changing Australian Images of 'the South Pacific,'" in David Hanlon and Geoffrey M. White Hanlon (eds.) *Voyaging Through the Contemporary Pacific* (Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 37-46.

5 See for example: Dennis Rumley, Vivian Louis Forbes and Christopher Griffin, eds., *Australia and the Arc of Instability: The Political and Cultural Dynamics of Regional Security* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006).

Human Security in the Architecture of the Pacific Island Regionalism

The Pacific Islands have their own perspectives on the regional security architecture, and these have not been identical with the state-centric traditional security concerns of the extra-regional powers. However, this divergence of security interests was not especially marked initially; the SPC's establishment satisfied the extra-regional founders' need for a common purpose in the region. Yet the SPC's original work programme — economic, health and social development — addressed Islander human security needs. As independence progressed across the region, and the agenda of non-traditional security concerns expanded to include resource protection, environmental protection and climate change, the separation between the relative interests in the two approaches to security became increasingly evident.

The contrast in security interests was inevitable and, at some point, had to emerge as an issue. The overwhelming majority of regional states chose to leave state defense largely to a benign international order. Only three states — Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Tonga — established formal defense forces. In certain independence arrangements, there were bilateral relations covering defense considerations, but these did not create treaty obligations. Moreover, there are no regional mutual security treaties that include any Pacific Island countries. ANZUS, whose initial coverage included much of the region's geographic scope, never expanded to include any newly independent states as signatories. This stands in contrast to the SPC, which opened its treaty to new members.

Human Security Eras of Pacific Island Regionalism

View Era	Pacific Island View	Perceived Nature of risk	Regionalist Response
1962- 1971	Decolonisation	Regional agenda controlled externally	Reform of the SPC/ PIPA
1971 -1988	Assertion of sovereignty	Inadequacy of existing architecture	South Pacific Forum/FFA/SRO
1988 - 2004	Intra-system cooperation	Inclusive linkages	SPOCC/CROP
2004 - present	Architectural renovation	Moderating pressures for rationalisation	Pacific Plan

Pacific Island entities were not in a position to manage their participation in regional affairs, much less shape the regional security architecture, due to their colonial status for several decades after SPC establishment. Yet, as the pressure for decolonization mounted, some local leaders asserted a claim for ownership of their regional security interests. A catalyst for this was West New Guinea's removal from the region in 1962. The territory was transferred from Dutch to Indonesian control without conferring with the territory's people.

There were reports of heart-wrenching tears shed by West New Guinean delegates at the 1962 South Pacific Conference as they expressed their anguish at the knowledge they would not see their South Pacific brothers again at the conference. This outraged Fiji's prominent leader Ratu Kamisese Mara. He attended the next SPC in Lae in 1965 and demanded change at the regional level to ensure that the Pacific peoples, not outsiders, would decide who belonged in their region. This demarche, coupled with Western Samoa's entry into full SPC membership as an independent state, kicked off a period of rapid renovation of the regional architecture with a strong focus on the autonomy of Island peoples to decide the regional agenda.

In addition to reform of the SPC's decision-making processes, Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa established the Pacific Islands Producers Association (PIPA) in 1965 to promote better terms of trade with New Zealand. PIPA

expanded its membership to include the Cook Islands, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, and Niue a few years later. This association provided a mechanism outside the formal colonial networks to develop ideas for more indigenous influence over the regional architecture. PIPA played a pivotal role in this when the failure to politically reform the SPC in 1970 led to an initiative that became the South Pacific Forum in 1971.

The institutional fracture created by the formation of the Forum was a visible demonstration of the widening gulf in security aspirations within the region in the declining days of colonialism. For the Island countries, nuclear testing was a human rather than state security issue. It pitted the risk to human, environment and marine resources health against perceived state security benefits for the testing powers. The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) has become the critical element for the security (state and human) of its Island members in the four decades since it was added to the regional architecture.⁶

The South Pacific Forum did not institutionalize itself, but rather was content initially to remain a “club” of regional leaders along the lines of the Commonwealth Meeting of Heads of Government (CHOGM). Instead, the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation (SPEC) was created in 1973 as an inter-governmental economic advisory agency to the Forum. SPEC became the Forum’s secretariat in 1975 and gradually acquired more responsibility on the Forum’s behalf. It was re-badged in 1988 as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

Shortly after its creation, the Forum espoused an objective to completely renovate the regional architecture to bring the entire region under one roof — its own. The “Single Regional Organization” (SRO) proposal essentially reflected a desire by some, but not all Forum members to decolonize the regional architecture. Despite the Forum’s commitment to an SRO, the Forum sanctioned the creation of a new organization in 1979 in order to respond to

⁶ Eric Shibuya, “The Problems and Potential of the Pacific Islands Forum,” in Jim Rolfe, ed., *The Asia-Pacific: A Region in Transition* (Honolulu: Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies, 2004), 102–115.

global changes in the Law of the Sea and assert regional ownership of marine resources security. There was a temporizing gesture to the SRO ideal, however. The South Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) was autonomous in law, but with a membership restricted to that of the Forum and reported annually to the Forum.

By 1987, the Forum accepted the SRO concept was moribund, and a period of regional cohabitation emerged with an architecture to reflect the new policy environment. A South Pacific Organizations Coordinating Committee (SPOCC) was established to replace the SRO concept. As the following chart of SPOCC members illustrates, human security remained the regional focus. Significantly, the strength of the human security focus was such that SPOCC was more inclusive. SPOCC was renamed the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific (CROP) in the late 1990s as part of a general move regionally to eliminate “South Pacific” from organizational names to demonstrate respect for membership north of the equator.

Regional Organizations

Inter-Governmental Organizations	Year	Headquarters
Pacific Community	1947	Noumea
Forum Secretariat	1972	Suva
Forum Fisheries Agency	1979	Honiara
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program	1989	Apia
South Pacific Tourism Organization	1991	Suva
Pacific Aviation Safety Association	2005	Port Vila
Trans-Governmental Organizations	Year	Headquarters
Pacific Island Development Program	1980	Honolulu
University of the South Pacific	1968	Suva
Pacific Power Association	1992	Suva

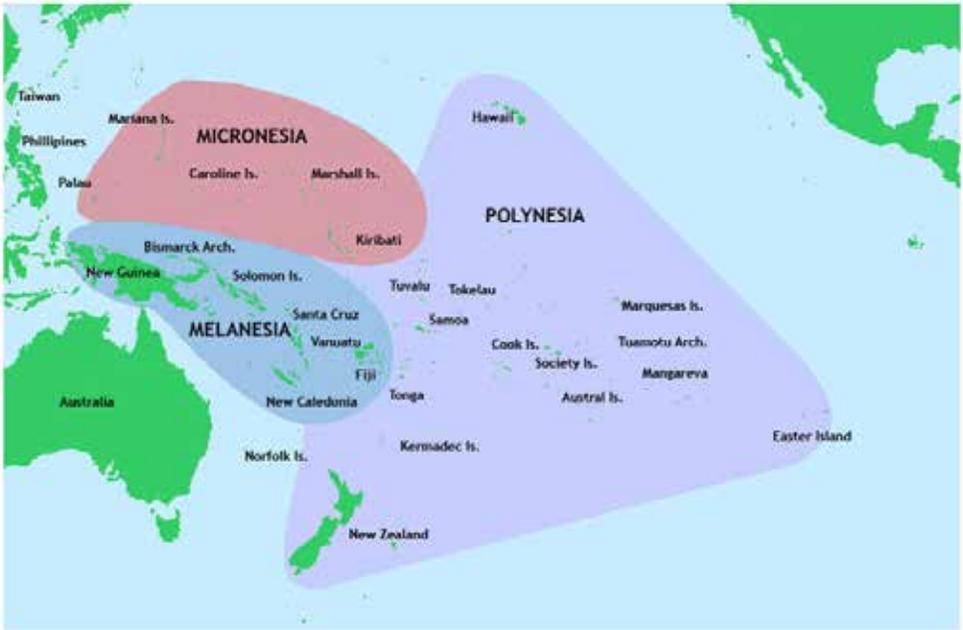
State security needs resurfaced at the end of the Cold War, however. The Forum secretariat established a Forum Regional Security Committee (FRSC) to collect and share intelligence on a variety of transnational crime, border protection and terrorism-related issues. As previously noted, the Forum itself agreed to a number of declarations addressing threats to state security.⁷ However, by 2005, threats perceived from weak, fragile and failing states led to what was virtually a reinvention of the SRO under a new name — the Pacific Plan. This Forum-based regional strategy was a root-and-branch renovation of the regional architecture to strengthen state capacity within the Pacific Islands.⁸

The Challenge of Sub-Regionalism: Attached, Semi-Detached or Detached?

From the early 1980s, the coherence of regional arrangements came under a new set of pressures for reform. Ironically for the Forum, given its early desire for an SRO, the pressures to recognize sub-regional interests affected it much more than the SPC. The primary reason for this was that motivation for sub-regional recognition was driven by politics rather than technical efficiency.

7 “Declaration by the South Pacific Forum on Law Enforcement Cooperation,” <http://www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/HONIARA%20Declaration.pdf>; “Aitutaki Declaration on Regional Security Cooperation,” 1997, <http://www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/AITUTAKI%20Declaration.pdf>; and the “Biketawa Declaration, 2000,” <http://www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/Biketawa%20Declaration.%2028%20October%202000.pdf>.

8 For a wide-ranging review of regionalism and security challenges faced by the Pacific Islands at the origins of the Pacific Plan see Michael Powles, ed., *Pacific Futures* (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2006).



Ethno-geographic Pacific Island sub-regions

Interestingly, the first significant sub-regional renovation was not culturally based, but was, in fact, driven by a national desire for resource security. The Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), established to put some “spine” into the FFA, included the richest tuna states and so spanned all three of the ethno-geographic sub-regions. The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) formed to support the indigenous Kanaks’ desire for independence in New Caledonia. The MSG’s success as a culturally linked, sub-regional association made it a catalyst for the Polynesian and Micronesian sub-regions to follow suit, albeit rather less fruitfully. The current arrangements are summarized in the following table.

Sub-regional associations

Inter-Governmental Organizations	Year	Headquarters
Melanesian Spearhead Group	(1983 [†]) 2007	Port Vila
Parties to the Nauru Agreement	1982 (2010*)	Majuro
Trans-Governmental Organizations	Year	Headquarters
Micronesian Presidents' Summit	2003	Host
Polynesian Leaders Group	2011	Host
Smaller Islands States (Group)	1992	Host
Te Vaka Moana	2011	Wellington

[†] The MSG was formed as a sub-regional association in 1983, but institutionalized with a treaty and headquarters in 2007.

* The PNA was formed by treaty in 1982, but, as it used the FFA headquarters for its activities, was not regarded as meeting the formal requirements of an IGO until 2010 when it set up an independent headquarters in Majuro.

A New Blueprint for Renovating the Regional Architecture?

In response to being frozen out of Forum activities, including its security arrangements in 2009, Fiji's Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama has pursued a new association of regional countries — the Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF).⁹ The PIDF has added new challenges and pressures for the renovation of Pacific Islands' regional institutions. PIDF's key objective is seen by some as a lever to crowbar Australia and New Zealand out of their "insider" status within the Forum. Alternatively, the PIDF initiative has been seen as a means to break the historic nexus between the SPC's island membership and entry into regional clubhouses. Bainimara-

⁹ Sandra Tarte, "A New Regional Pacific Voice?," *Pacific Islands Brief* 4, Pacific Islands Development Program, East-West Center, August 28, 2013.

ma has raised the prospect of extending full membership in PIDF to Asian states while excluding Australia and New Zealand. The positive spin on the need for the PIDF is that it will allow non-state stakeholders from civil society and the private sector to get a seat at the regional corporate body's table. Taking this line, the Fijian prime minister has argued that the PIDF will not be competitive against, but complementary to the existing regional architecture.

Conclusions

The ad hoc evolution of the Pacific Island regional system has been a factor in both its adaptive institutional development and the recurrent perceived need to renovate it. The security elements of this architecture were important from the outset. However, a fundamental divergence in perspectives on security objectives between those outside the region and those inside has become a source of tension in proposals for remodeling the overall architecture. Central to this friction has been the engagement of the outside powers that constructed the original edifice and continue to fund the system and those on the inside who inhabit the region.

The contemporary regional system is not well suited to cover state security, having been designed ostensibly for, and then adapted to focus on human security issues. Post-Cold War developments such as global terrorism, the emergence of the Asia-Pacific century, and the U.S. pivot to the Pacific have renewed external concerns for the adequacy of state security issues within the existing regional architecture. Fiji's role in re-engaging with the regional system after its 2014 election has amplified apprehensions as to the direction both general and sub-regional architectural renovation might take. Given the dependence on extra-regional support for the Pacific Islands regional system, it is unlikely that future renovations will be entirely do-it-yourself for regional states despite what some of them might wish.