

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS IN POST-COLONIAL
RELATIONS IN THE PACIFIC: SOME ASPECTS OF AID, TRADE,
AND REGIONALISM.

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Introduction

Post-colonial international relations are not determined primarily by constitutional status, but rather by the enduring realities of smallness, remoteness, limited resources, and the longstanding interests of the larger countries on the Pacific rim and beyond" (Macdonald, 1986).

The colonial powers in the South Pacific---except for the United States, France and Indonesia---showed relatively little resistance to constitutional independence for their colonies. One may ask: to what extent were moves towards constitutional decolonization prompted not so much by international pressures but by the realization that, generally speaking, most of their South Pacific colonies could not "pay for themselves"? Did the colonial powers believe that constitutional independence did not mean the loss of economic, political or strategic interests in the region, but that, if anything, it meant the perpetuation of these interests---but without the burden of being a "colonialist"? Was much of the region seen as lacking in resources, too small or too remote?

Taking these questions as a point of departure, I will, following Barrie Macdonald, advance the argument that decolonization, in the "real" sense of the word, has not taken place in the constitutionally independent South Pacific. "Lop-sided" relationships are still the bane of virtually all South Pacific countries. The fact that many South Pacific countries have too few presently viable resources, and are too remote and small have contributed to

these relationships. Furthermore, the interests of metropolitan countries have seen to the perpetuation of these "unequal" relationships.

This is, of course, not to say that these four factors are the only decisive ones in the making of post-colonial relationships. Can we negate the importance of constitutional status?

I agree with Barrie Macdonald's statement that post-colonial international relationships are determined by smallness, remoteness, limited resources, constitutional status and the longstanding interests of the larger countries outside of the region. However, Macdonald's statement neglects to bring to the forefront the "full" extent of the colonial histories of the islands. The term "longstanding interests" of the bigger countries from beyond only hints at a colonial presence. It does not make it explicit that there were relationships---needless to say, two-way relationships---in the colonial era. These were the very relationships---the outcome of which set the stage, in part, for what was to be after constitutional decolonialization.

This essay will deal with three broad areas within the realm of post-colonial relations. Discussion of these areas will illustrate the extent to which constitutional status, resource availability, remoteness, smallness and the longstanding interests of the metropolitan powers prevail. The areas are aid, trade and regional organisations.

The main tenet of this paper will be that in the Pacific region, constitutional status is just as important as smallness, remoteness, resource availability and the longstanding interests of the bigger world powers, in post-colonial relations.

Macdonald relegates the significance of constitutional status to a secondary position. Constitutional independence has imbued island countries with a sense of "nationhood" that, quite inevitably, impacts upon their post-colonial international relationships. This sentiment may not be the only decisive factor in their international relationships--- but it is no less important than the constraints of Macdonald's "realities".

The paper will also argue that constitutional status is, in fact, an important indicator of the extent to which Pacific island entities are dependent. The politically independent countries are less dependent than others in the areas of trade, aid and control of regional strategic, economic and political concerns. These independent entities are of varying interest to metropolitan countries. Some are as small, remote and lacking in resources as colonies, territories and countries with a Free Association status.

It is first necessary to survey the main characteristics of the process of decolonization in the Pacific Islands.

Decolonization

The process of decolonization began in the South Pacific in 1962 with the independence of Western Samoa. Why was it that political decolonization came so easily to some Pacific territories but not to others?

In the former Australian, New Zealand and British colonies, the road to independence was a generally peaceful one. The indigenous peoples of these colonies had hardly voiced a request for independence when it was thrust upon them. In the case of Fiji, for example, it was the largely non-indigenous Indian populace, represented by the National Federation Party, and not the indigenous Fijians, that demanded that independence be granted sooner. Another example of where the colonial power took the lead in granting independence was in the case of Papua New Guinea; here the idea was generally not well received, especially by the Highlanders. The independence date proposed by the Gough Whitlam government (1976) was considered too early.

The British, New Zealanders and Australians gave up their South Pacific colonies relatively easily for two major reasons. First, most of their South Pacific colonies were not profitable: most were small, lacking in economic or strategic resources and were geographically remote. However, not all of these entities were insignificant economically. Indeed, Fiji, with its sugar industry, and Nauru, with its phosphate deposits, were quite profitable. Papua New Guinea,

and, to a lesser extent, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands, had the resources to support profit-making enterprises.

The second major reason was that international pressure aimed at metropolitan countries that still held colonies was strong. Asian and African countries, newly admitted to the United Nations, were some of the strongest advocates of global decolonization---regardless of whether or not these colonies fulfilled any criterion of "preparedness". Australia, New Zealand and Britain could also maintain close economic and political relations with their former colonies--in spite of constitutional independence. The major plantation and trading companies in the post-independence years, for example, continued to be based in the former metropole. Indeed, multi-national mining companies operating in Papua New Guinea gained a new legitimacy when they signed agreements with an independent government rather than with a colonial power.

As for the colonies of France and the United States, the gaining of independence was and, in some cases, continues to be a long and bitter fight. Paradoxically, and in general, most of the countries which did not agitate for independence have gained this political status while those that strongly desired independence have found it difficult to secure. Colonies in the latter category, including French Polynesia and New Caledonia, have continuing importance for the colonial power. Strategic and economic factors are the longstanding interests that have made France reluctant to

give up her South Pacific colonies. Strategic and economic considerations have also prevented Indonesia from entertaining the idea of self-determination for Irian Jaya. The case of the United States in Micronesia is another example of how the bigger powers' interests are often decisive in whether or not a country achieves political independence. As Robert Kiste says, the United States' presence in Micronesia had been instigated because of military and strategic concerns (Kiste, 1986). The actions of the United States after the Second World War, he says, manifested such concerns; the United Nations' only strategic trust was created, access to the region was limited and military bases were set up in the Marshall Islands and Northern Marianas (Kiste, 1986). United States' interests were also reflected in the long negotiations for self-government which began in the 1960s.

It can be seen that the present constitutional statuses of Pacific countries are loosely related to the longstanding interests of the former colonial powers.

The Direct and Immediate Consequences of Decolonization

Are the decolonized countries of the South Pacific different now than they were prior to their change in constitutional status? According to Yash Ghai, decolonization has resulted in constitutions that have perpetuated the dominance of colonialism and its products. As he says:

The constitutions are so structured as to transfer authority to an educated, westernised elite, who speak a common language with departing colonialists and think and plan within frameworks common to both. In that sense the constitution, far from marking the end of colonialism, can be viewed as its culmination, recording and consolidating the final victory of the westernized, Christainised, urbanised elites, in control of the restructured formal state, distinguished by their increasing repudiation of traditional situations (in Ali and Crocombe, 1983).

Constitutions, Ghai says, set the stage for neo-colonialism and the dependency it nurtured. Constitutions also created financial burdens on the new nation because the separation of colony and metropole led to larger bureaucracies and more expatriates. Ghai says that the new governments find it quite impossible to change the direction of economic and social conditions, even if they so wanted. He says:

... independence has not provided them with the option they expected it could, the country remains, willingly or otherwise, a captive of a larger economic system. It is scarcely necessary to have formal agreements of association for the continuation of relations that we call neo-colonialism (in Ali and Crocombe, 1983).

The generalisation could be made that upon independence, the leaders were indeed the products of western education and western churches: traditions may have been neglected. But, this is, of course, changing as the South Pacific enters into its third decade of independence: in Fiji, for example, traditional leaders are attempting to regain their political dominance.

However, it must be said that independence did not just mean the perpetuation of westernisation and dependency. For many South Pacific countries, the immediate impact of independence, also brought the redefinition of land tenure and citizenship (in Ali and Crocombe, 1983). Vanuatu, for example, is one of the countries cited by Ghai where colonially-derived land titles were disregarded and where there was an attempt (albeit a not altogether successful one) to restore land ownership to that which existed in pre-colonial times.

Even those countries that gained full political independence continue to be influenced by neo-colonial forces. The nature of these relationships can be explored by a look at aid patterns in the South Pacific.

Aid to the South Pacific

South Pacific countries of all constitutional statuses receive some form of aid. This section will examine the relationship between aid and constitutional status: it proposes that constitutional status is just as primary a factor in determining the nature of the relationship between donor and recipient as are geographical constraints and strategic importance.

Firstly, why do metropolitan countries provide aid to the South Pacific? One could say that metropolitan countries largely provide aid as a gesture---to show that they are committed to the "development" of economically poorer

countries and to the cause of humanity. Japanese Foreign Minister, Tadashi Kuranari, in January 1987, for example, told the Fiji government that his country was committed through aid to helping Pacific island states "build solid foundations for future development" (Islands Business, February, 1987. p19). But, there is obviously an underlying motivation for such "gestures".

Perhaps, there is no way in which a wealthy or industrially developed country can avoid being a donor--- without being criticized internationally or without getting a negative image. Furthermore, it could be said that donors expect a return for their assistance. In this sense, they are not really "donors". The biggest proportion of aid seems to go to where its ideologies or its interests are perceived as being most threatened. Similarly, is aid to the Pacific instigated by donors' interests? Here we look at the example of a new donor to the Pacific---Japan.

As reported by Islands Business Japan has ulterior motives: Japan is trying to put an end to a a five year moratorium on nuclear waste dumping in the Pacific ocean. This is the moratorium imposed by the 1983 London Dumping Convention. Japan's interest in the Pacific is apparent in recent aid asistance and investment such as the construction of a causeway linking Betio and Bairiki on Tarawa, in the Marshall Islands, a \$4.5 million fishing base, and in post-coup Fiji, hotel investment amounting to more than \$100 million (Islands Business, October 1988, p46). Toshio Doko,

the honorary president of the Federation of Economic Organizations in Japan, once said that the problem of nuclear waste dumping "cannot be settled unless Japan gives security and some benefits to the Pacific peoples" (Islands Business, February 1987 p14). The Japanese are also pursuing other interests in the Pacific: access to the Pacific's fishing grounds, for example, is another major consideration for Japan.

Figures for aid in 1982 to the Pacific (excluding Guam and the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands) indicated an inflow of about A\$1 029 million or A\$202 per capita (South Pacific Commission, 1986, p23). In 1985, \$655 657 000 or A\$121 per capita was donated to the Pacific region (excluding Guam but including the Trust Territories). Those countries that have a particularly high per capita income from aid are the New Zealand-associated countries of Tokelau, Niue and the Cook Islands, and the American and French territories. Except for Nauru and Fiji, which receive relatively very little, most of the larger South Pacific countries are allotted aid amounting to one third of their national incomes; as for the smaller countries, aid provides more than two thirds of their incomes (MacDonald, 1986, p118).

The following comparison of 1977 figures shows that aid to the South Pacific Commission countries is relatively high compared to other regions of the world. Aid to the Pacific, including US territories, (in 1977) was \$US705 per capita

while aid to other "developing" countries amounted to \$US8.7 per capita.

Aid and Constitutional Status

It would seem that a country's constitutional status is of primary importance in the donor-recipient relationship. Among South Pacific countries, those with the status of colony, or those "freely-associated" receive substantially more aid than the others---who are "independent". However, there is a further distinction: among those with the statuses of Free Association and colony, those that receive the most are those that hold more interests (strategic or economic) for the donor.

An example of this is the fact that France gives more aid to New Caledonia and French Polynesia and substantially less, per capita, to Wallis and Futuna. In 1982, New Caledonia received \$A1073 per capita from France; French Polynesia was given much of her \$A1104 by France (the other donor being the European Economic Community): and the French donated \$A 601 per capita to Wallis and Futuna (South Pacific Commission, 1986). Unlike the other two countries, Wallis and Futuna does not have a known exploitable resource---such as New Caledonia's nickel or French Polynesia's nuclear test sites. Moreover, "aid" to the mineral-rich New Caledonia is "recoverable": because of the fact that the nickel mines are owned largely by French consortiums, profits drain back to France. The Rothschild

mining corporation in New Caledonia is the second major producer of Nickel in the world (Fry, 1981). New Caledonia also provides a market for French products: indeed, the New Caledonian balance of trade is negative A\$ 127 801 000 (South Pacific Commission 1982 p9). With virtually all of its trade conducted with France (A\$ 361 444 000), most of the colony's revenues are being directed back to France (South Pacific Commission, 1982). This example may not show post-colonial relationships but it does illustrate that the two factors of constitutional status and the metropolitan country's interests should not be under-estimated as two of the primary determinants of aid relationships.

Critics think that the French are trying to gain popularity in the Pacific so as to dilute opposition directed at their nuclear tests. Some argue that they are behind the establishment of the Polynesian Economic and Cultural Community. The Community, which was initiated early last year by the King of Tonga, is primarily concerned with promoting the Polynesian culture among Polynesians throughout the Pacific, regardless of the political status of the respective countries in which they live.

One of the skeptics, New Zealand's Opposition leader, Jim Bolger, points this out, saying that "what the French government is up to is to increase its influence. There is no question about that. They are just using a cheque book...to improve their profile" (Islands Business March 1988 p18). There are, however, Pacific leaders who construe

the French involvement in the South Pacific as benevolent. Tonga's King Taufa'ahau Tupou, for example, says that the French are very interested in the Polynesian Community and that they have "lots of development such as solar electricity which can be used in other Pacific Islands". France, he says, "because of its responsibilities in the Pacific, has channelled technical skills and scientific abilities...to solving island problems" (Islands Business, February 1988 p18). Although Tonga does not belong to the categories of countries that receive the most aid, the King does equate aid with development.

A second group of Pacific countries that receive a lot of aid are the New Zealand-associated entities. Besides aid, they receive remittances from relatives who have migrated to New Zealand through special provisions in the immigration laws. There are, in fact, larger populations of Cook Islanders, Niueans and Tokelauans in New Zealand than in their respective home countries. In aid, the Cook Islands received A\$ 586 per capita in 1982 and Niue \$A1 073 (South Pacific Commission, 1986, p23). In 1985, the Cook Islands were given A\$206 of aid per capita and Niue A\$1 758. In contrast Papua New Guinea received A\$103 per capita the same year and Fiji A\$49. In this case, the fact that these countries are receiving more than the nations that are neither colonies nor "freely-associated", is directly related to historical ties, when New Zealand, under the League of Nations, administered these island groups. It

seems that New Zealand has little, if anything to gain from such an arrangement: in fact, New Zealand has offered the constitutional status of full independence and has offered to sever the ties of Free Association on demand.

In comparison to these "colonies" and "Free Associations", most of the constitutionally "fully" independent countries receive much less. In 1982, for example, Fiji received \$A 53 of aid per capita; Papua New Guinea, \$A 93; Solomon Islands, \$A 114; Western Samoa, \$A 143; Tonga, \$A 179 and Vanuatu \$A 212 (South Pacific Commission, 1986). More recent figures show a similar pattern: in 1985, the figures were: Fiji, \$49; Papua New Guinea \$103; Solomon Islands, \$56; Western Samoa, \$436 and Tonga \$106. So, again, it has been shown that constitutional status cannot be relegated to a secondary position in the relationships between the region and the industrialized countries beyond it.

On the other hand, constitutional status cannot truly be accorded any greater importance than are other factors in MacDonald's list of "enduring realities". This is apparent in the case of constitutionally independent countries receiving more aid per capita than a colony: Tuvalu, which was the recipient of \$A789 per capita in 1982 was handed more than the French territory of Wallis and Futuna (\$A601 per capita). One can conclude that the constitutionally independent countries that seem more dependent are those that are remote, small and lack many resources.

Trade and Constitutional Status

It appears that constitutional status and colonial historical ties are important in trade relationships in the region. However, as will be discussed, although these seemingly decisive factors may give a country an edge over others---ultimately, the buyers' interests are of greater importance. Most Pacific countries, regardless, of what commodities they offer, are vulnerable to the interests of the buyers. Pacific countries are crippled by limited resources, smallness, remoteness from trade centres, and the similarities in the exports that they offer. Again the question of self-determination arises: can Pacific countries determine their economies and, consequently, the paths of development that they want to follow? Essentially, do Pacific countries have many choices?

All South Pacific countries, except for American Samoa, in 1982 and the Solomon Islands and Nauru in 1984 have negative trade balances. (There are no statistics available for Kiribati and Guam in 1982. See Appendix, Tables I and II). The countries with the highest trade deficit per capita were the Cook Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and French Polynesia: they all had deficits that exceeded -A\$1 000. All these countries have in common the fact that they are either colonies, territories or entities in "Free Association". They are politically ~~in~~ dependent.

Nauru and the Solomons, the only two Pacific Island countries with no deficit in 1984, are politically independent. Except for Tokelau, a New Zealand colony, the countries with the lowest deficits, Western Samoa, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Tokelau and Tonga, are politically independent. These politically independent countries also generally receive less aid per capita than the non-independent entities with the largest trade imbalances. The appearance of greater affluence in lifestyle in the non-independent countries belies their relatively huge deficits--and the fact that they are also the biggest aid recipients.

The relationship between the trade balances in the Pacific region and aid is an important one. The countries (and organizations) that provide the most aid to the region are also those that conduct the most trade with the region.

These countries that provide the most aid to the Pacific Islands (including the dependent territories) are Australia with an average of 44.45% of total aid to the region in the years 1982-1985; France with 10.54%; USA with 13.46%; the United Kingdom with 3.52%; Japan with 3.03%; New Zealand with 3.09%; and the European Economic Community countries with 11.62%. See Appendix, Table IV.

Figures for 1984 show that these major aid donors to the Pacific Islands are also the major sources for the Islands' imports (See Appendix. Table III).

The general pattern is that the metropolitan countries (also the major donors) have trade balances with the Pacific region that are favourable to them. Australia, in 1984, for example, had a balance of trade of +A\$576 000 000. New Zealand's was +A\$ 267 000 000. The French had a favourable balance of A\$280 000 000. USA had \$229 000 000 more exports than imports. One can indeed make the conclusion that the benefits that metropolitan aid donors receive from the Pacific Islands are often disguised by the seemingly large amount of aid donated from the region.

In the relationship between aid and trade, there are Pacific Island countries that concurrently receive large amounts of aid while exporting very little and importing a lot. These countries are generally those that are not politically independent.

French colonies and New Zealand-associated countries, although disadvantaged by high trade deficits, have their economies supplemented, as has been discussed earlier, by relatively high proportions of aid. Constitutionally independent countries do not have much in the way of commodities that the metropolitan countries desperately seek, and cannot get anywhere else. However, what the region can provide is stability and allegiance to the idea of a Western lake in the Pacific. This loyalty can be given, as the metropolitan countries know, at a "price" that need not be high.

So it can be said that the trade relationships between the countries of the Pacific, on one hand, and those of the Pacific rim, on the other, are largely decided by a vicious circle of dependence. Pacific countries depend heavily on their buyers---for trade concessions or just to buy their commodities. This imbalance in the relationship is primarily caused by the combination of the factors---remoteness, limited resources (except for PNG), limited capacity to exploit available resources (true for PNG), and narrow economic bases (except, to an extent, for Fiji).

South Pacific Commission figures for trade in 1982, show that the value for imports for the South Pacific region (excluding Guam and the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands) was A\$ 3 248 000 000. Compare this with the value of exports in the same year----A\$ 1 700 000 000. This means a trade deficit of A\$ 1 548 000 000---the Pacific region imports about three times what it exports. Most of the Pacific region's exports are agricultural and marine products: the range of exports is not that wide. Of significance is the fact that most of the countries have the same commodities to offer. Of equal importance is the fact that these commodities can be bought from many other "developing countries" and at competitive prices. Some examples of the exports of the region are fish and other seafoods by American Samoa, Fiji, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Solomons, Tonga and Vanuatu; and the bananas sold by the Cook Islands, Fiji, Tonga,

Vanuatu and Western Samoa. Because of the limited range of exports, Pacific countries cannot have significant trade relationships among themselves. Because other economically poor countries with low wages (South East Asian countries, for example) are offering the same commodities, Pacific countries face the need to diversify. The problem for many of the Pacific nations is that there is little to diversify into.

Within the Pacific region itself, there are essentially two categories of countries that are more successful in trade than others. One group consists of the bigger Pacific countries, which have more resources, and Nauru, which is about to be depleted of phosphate.

The "success" of the first group shows that constitutional status and historical ties, largely, determine where the islands export to. Colonies trade almost exclusively with their "mother countries". The success of these countries, however, is only superficial---for how much benefits do the majority of the people get from this trade? And secondly, if independent, would their exports still be viable? In the case of New Caledonia, for example, the export market is there. New Caledonia does not have to face the difficulties of looking for and establishing trade partners---the way that most independent Pacific countries have to. However, most of the nickel mining companies are from metropolitan France. So, with profits draining out, New

Caldonia does not benefit as much as it should from its mineral resources.

Countries with Free Association status trade almost exclusively with the nations that they are "associated with". For these countries, too, there are export markets that are more stable than those of the "fully independent" countries. However, the smaller island colonies and the countries in "Free Association" are obviously faced with an economic dilemma. To break away from the metropolitan country would most certainly mean the loss of secure markets. Do Tahiti and Niue, for example, wish to face a similarly dire economic plight as politically independent Tuvalu or Kiribati? Do they want to "risk" being independent?

So, while island countries with fewer resources and greater isolation and smaller size stand to gain in trade relationships, they have to "sacrifice" being of a politically independent status. The bigger Pacific countries may not have the advantage of secure trade markets: however, what they have is independence and their wider repertoire of resources.

This second category of Pacific countries with relative success in trade is led by Papua New Guinea and Fiji, both big Pacific countries. Most politically independent Pacific countries have some of their exports protected under treaties. However, the bigger Pacific countries benefit more from these trade agreements than the smaller nations: they

simply have more to export. Furthermore, trade treaties are negotiated only under certain conditions: these include whether or not the commodity is needed, whether there had been historical ties between the buyers and the exporters and, ultimately, whether or not the buyers' interests are being served. Such treaties include SPARTECA and the Lome Conventions.

Historical ties, the importers' longstanding interests, and the product itself, are factors which, it can be said, were decisive in the signing of the sugar treaty, under the Lome Convention, between the EEC and Fiji. Fiji, by virtue of its being a former British colony, was eligible for consideration in trade agreements with prices favourable to her. The buyers' longstanding interests of maintaining a pro-West sphere in the Pacific and keeping out the Soviet Union and now, increasingly, Libya, was also a major consideration. Third, the fact that no other Pacific country belonging to the Commonwealth was exporting sugar made it easier for Fiji to sell most of her crop to the EEC. However, although prices are good, it cannot be assumed that Fiji's markets are secure. In fact, there's no such thing as an indispensable export and a secure market. However, some countries' insecurity is exacerbated by their remoteness, smallness, and lack of industrialization. These factors of smallness, remoteness and lack of industrialization, in turn, affect the communication and transport infrastructure

that can be afforded. The Pacific belong to this category; they have little bargaining power.

Despite these problems, Fiji is considered a trade giant among the other South Pacific countries. The smaller countries of the region do not have the basic requisites for export crops. In a country like Tuvalu, for example, arable land, expertise and communication links are lacking. These are the reasons why Tuvalu exports only one crop---copra. The export value of copra, for 1982, A\$ 27 000 (South Pacific Commission, 1986) provided Tuvalu with three quarters of its total export earnings that year.

Another small Pacific country, Kiribati (717 square kilometers of land), is trying to make tuna economically viable. With 3 550 000 square kilometers of sea, Kiribati has the second largest Exclusive Economic Zone in the Pacific. Kiribati's Iremaia Tabai, in 1987, had said: "Eveyone says we are so poor. But I am optimistic about our future..." (Island Business December 1987). This optimism, prompted largely by a new alternative---a deal with the Soviet Union---was to be shortlived when the Soviets decided not to renew the agreement. Kiribati's experience typifies the dilemma of small countries with small economies. Small countries have to be subject to the changing relations between the big powers. Whereas the "threat" was once the Soviet Union, now it is Libya.

Any hint of Libyan involvement does not fail to attract media attention. Examples include the training of FLNKS

members in Libya in 1984; two years later, the ni-Vanuatu who, the Vanuatu government said, went to Libya for journalism training; the visit to Libya in March 1986 by Vanuatu Foreign Minister, Sela Molisa and Secretary-General of the Vanuaku Pati, Barak Sope; and the Tahitian political activists who were supposedly heading towards Libya last year. Kiribati had also created a furore in the United States and Australia when it became, in 1985, the first Pacific nation to sign a fishing treaty with the Soviet Union: this was when, paradoxically, the US and Australia were business partners with the Soviet Union.

It seems as if island nations have to account for their international post-colonial relationships. Although Pacific nations are supposed to conduct their own foreign affairs, because they are politically independent, in reality they are subtly co-erced into either having relations only with powers friendly to the West. If Island nations refuse to be thus compelled (as it was in the case of Kiribati), they, at least, have to be on the defense: as it is, the US and other big powers, do not have to answer to Pacific countries, about the manner in which their foreign affairs is conducted.

So, a politically independent country would have some option in deciding who to have relations with. On the other hand, a colony, a territory, and, to much lesser extents, a nation in "Free Association" would have its foreign affairs controlled by the metropolitan power. But, while independent

countries, may have some "leverage", they still have to contend with the geo-political interests of their "benefactors".

Regional Organisations and Constitutional Status

It began with such comments as that made by Fiji Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara at the 1965 sixth South Pacific Conference in Lae, that metropolitan countries were "unimaginatively treating the South Pacific people as though they were children who were not capable of handling their own affairs" (Fry, 1979 p76). Since then, Pacific Island nations, upon gaining political independence, have been increasingly trying to become more independent of their former mother countries. In effect, they are trying to negate the dictum expressed by those such as MacDonald--- that post-colonial relationships are dictated primarily by remoteness, smallness and the interests of metropolitan powers and secondarily by constitutional status. Regional organizations have made an importance difference in such relations: in other words, constitutional status, as a factor, must not be relegated to a secondary role.

To begin with, Pacific island countries cannot belong to regional organizations such as the South Pacific Forum or the Forum Secretariat if they are still colonies or territories. Whether or not one believes that these organisations have achieved their goals, the fact is that

its members now have a voice. Non-independent entities, on the other hand, have not even reached this stage.

Today, in its second decade of post-colonialism, economic co-operation is high on the agenda for much of the region. At the 19th South Pacific Forum, one of the main changes was that of the proposed shift of focus from New Caledonia and other political issues to improving economic co-operation. The new South Pacific Organisations Coordinating Committee would be composed of the heads of regional organisations that would meet to discuss ways of stepping up on regional co-operation. Although there are many problems to regional economic co-operation, as we have seen in the section on intra-regional trade, the tone was highly optimistic. As Vanuatu's Walter Lini summed up: "We hope...to have a South Pacific Commonwealth because groupings like that seems to us the way the world is reorganising itself economically" (Islands Business March 88 p17).

While Pacific leaders see regional organisations as vehicle through which new economic initiatives could be injected into the region, the bigger powers often see them as a means towards achieving the goal of regional "stability". Of the many reasons for aid in the Pacific, perhaps the most important is that of using aid to achieve political and economic stability. Japan, Kuranari said,

"...could not support the introduction of a new tension into this peaceful and undisturbed region. It realizes that

it cannot be indifferent to the...Pacific..." (Islands Business, February 1987 p14).

Kuranari continued:

...However one may wish it otherwise, peace and stability cannot be maintained without adequate thought being given to global security considerations. This principle does not allow any exception for the Pacific region, despite its being geographically far from the world's areas of heightened tensions (Islands Business, February 1987 p14).

It is through regional organizations that metropolitan donors are able to indirectly influence, if not dictate, the foreign policies of the constitutionally independent countries. The South Pacific Forum was set up as a counter organization to the South Pacific Commission which island leaders expressed dissatisfaction with, saying that it was too apolitical and dominated by the metropolitan powers. The South Pacific Forum is an example of how constitutional status has, indirectly and unwittingly, been a decisive force in post-colonial international relations. This is, firstly, because of the fact that one has to be constitutionally independent or self-governing to join the Forum and, secondly, the metropolitan nations can effect an impact on these constitutionally independent South Pacific countries----as a regional unit. Paradoxically, the very organization that was established by Island leaders to promote greater regional "self-determination" has also become the vehicle through which donors could, needless to say, more efficiently influence regional politics.

The constraints under which the Island countries of the Forum work are apparent in the contradictions in regional ventures such as the Pacific Forum Line. As Fry points out, the continued operation of this shipping line is possible only because of the large amounts of financial assistance provided by metropolitan countries (Fry, 1981). The irony is in the fact that the shipping line had been established precisely to minimise dependence on metropolitan shipping lines. Indeed, the South Pacific Commission depends on funding: 97% of the Commission's budget is derived from the contributions of the metropolitan countries. SPEC is two-thirds funded by Australia and New Zealand (Fry, 1981).

The case of the signing of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty of Rarotonga in 1986, is a single event that epitomises both the success and shortcomings of politically independent countries attempting "self-determination".

As Forum countries such as Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and the Solomons would argue, on the surface, the treaty looks like a milestone of an achievement. Perhaps, it is, considering, the opposition from the United States and staunch South Pacific believers in the concept of "nuclear deterrent" and the fact that there were some countries that really thought that the treaty had gone far enough in its conditions. Tonga, for example, wanted each signatory to make their own decisions on whether or not they should let

foreign warships and planes temporarily use their harbours and airports (Island Business May 1986 p30).

The opponents of the treaty would point at the exclusion of any mention of the communication and surveillance facilities which the United States has in Australia and its Pacific territories. The treaty does not acknowledge the fact that Australia----the treaty's main advocate---presently, hosts the United States' tracking and communication bases---components of a system for the direction of nuclear missile-firing submarines (Islands Business May 1986 p30). There is also no attempt, in the treaty, to control nuclear weapons on ships outside the twelve-mile territorial limits of South Pacific states. The treaty also does not ban nuclear-powered ships or ships that carry nuclear weapons. It is left to individual countries to make the decision on whether or not to admit such ships.

Ironically, the United States has not accepted this "soft" treaty. Lop-sided post-colonial relationships, where the Pacific Islands are the dependent party, have dictated the terms of this treaty. Can the treaty afford to be "radical"---and in the process upset the longstanding interests of the United States? Can Australia risk being ostracized by the United States, the way that New Zealand was?

However, at least the treaty came into existence. It is a beginning. Nuclear powers such as the United States would rather that it was never written.

Another regional effort that did not go unrewarded was the signing of the fishing deal with the United States. The deal marks an end to the United States' refusal to recognize the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone of the island nations. Because of the fact that Pacific Island nations have few resources and because for the smallest island nations, the greatest resource is the sea, the treaty is of enormous significance: it has been one of the successes of the Forum. Such a treaty came to being through the efforts of the politically independent island countries. Without such independence, island entities would have no power to make their own decisions, without the approval of the metropolitan power.

The reinscription of New Caledonia by the United Nations Decolonization Committee has been extolled by many as another of the fruits of the concerted labour of politically independent island nations. It had taken Pacific Island leaders long to agree, in the first place, on whether or not New Caledonia should be enlisted. Fiji's Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, for example, had had his reservations. The Cook Islands' Sir Thomas Davis had adamantly opposed the idea. Many of the smaller Pacific nations had seemed indifferent. At last, after five years of not taking a stand, 1985's August Forum meeting made up its mind. Whether or not, this was, as Islands Business called it, "a victory for the Kanaks", is another question, albeit an important one. The fact is that the Forum countries

managed, despite initial difference in views, to show regional co-operation---a co-operation that would have been impossible that they been tied to metropolitan powers as colonies or territories.

The fact that the Treaty of Rarotonga, New Caledonia's reinscription and the Forum Fisheries deal with the United States were all advocated by the Forum countries---all constitutionally independent countries, we must not forget--illustrates the power, limited as it may be---of nations, as opposed to colonies or territories. Constitutional status has proved to be indispensable for island nations in post-colonial international relations.

An example of the fears that govern territories is evident in the 1986 Constitutional Convention of American Samoa. The Convention had recommended that "no nuclear fission power plant shall be constructed or radioactive materials disposed of in American Samoa without the prior approval by a two-thirds vote in each house of the legislature" (Islands Business August 1986 p16). Delegates, however, overturned this proposition: they expressed a need to be cautious---as such a nuclear ban proposal might be interpreted to mean that American Samoa was attempting to keep the United States military forces out (Islands Business August 1986 p16).

While politically independent island countries also harbour some fears of antagonizing their "benefactors", theirs' is not as intense as those of territories---who have

become so dependent on metropolitan countries that it is difficult to envisage an economy without them. Indeed, in the 1980s, independent Pacific countries are increasingly beginning to demand greater economic self-reliance and independence of thought. On the fore of such a consciousness is Kiribati and the Melanesian Spearhead members.

Conclusion:

The question that must be addressed is: who holds the balance of power in the Pacific region? It is certainly true that constitutional independence is not inevitably followed by the power to be economically self-determined. It is a fallacy that politically independent countries are economically independent---even if they may have many resources. The countries of the world are so inter-related that no nation, however "equipped" for "self-reliance", could be independent.

However, there is great difference in the varying degrees of dependence and independence between the big countries and the small---such as those of the Pacific. For the Pacific nations, there is an underlying dependence---that rules all of its relationships with the countries of the Pacific rim and beyond.

Within the region, the constitutional status of political independence, regardless of remoteness, smallness and metropolitan countries' longstanding interests, has allowed Pacific leaders to start to challenge the hegemony

of the Western powers and Japan in the region. Some constitutional statuses (colony, territory and "Free Association") can be advantageous to the island groups, especially in terms of aid and special immigration laws. However, it is the constitutionally independent countries that are less dependent on metropolitan powers. They, generally speaking, have considerably smaller trade deficits. Some of them are even contesting the metropolitan powers' dominance in the region.

The constitutional statuses of island nations is increasing becoming of greater significance in international relations. Independence, for island nations, is no longer a misnomer, if indeed it ever was.

Post-colonial international relations are certainly not only determined only by remoteness, smallness, resourcelessness and the longstanding interests of the metropolitan powers, as Macdonald says. Post-colonial relations are also determined by constitutional status.

APPENDIX

Table I

1982: Balance of Trade Per Capita

Country	Balance of Trade Per Capita
American Samoa	+A\$1 967
Cook Islands	-A\$ 960
Fiji	-A\$ 336
French Polynesia	-A\$3 168
Kiribati
New Caledonia	-A\$ 881
Niue	-A\$ 645
Papua New Guinea	-A\$ 77
Solomons	-A\$ 3
Tokelau	-A\$ 207
Tonga	-A\$ 380
Tuvalu	-A\$ 307
Vanuatu	-A\$ 285
Wallis and Futuna	-A\$ 286
Western Samoa	-A\$ 232
Guam

Source: South Pacific Commission, 1987.

Table II

1984: Balance of Trade Per Capita

Country	Balance of Trade Per Capita
American Samoa	-A\$2 347
Cook Islands	-A\$1 101
Fiji	-A\$ 317
French Polynesia	-A\$3 362
Kiribati	-A\$ 135
New Caledonia	-A\$ 681
Niue	-A\$ 893
Papua New Guinea	-A\$ 27
Solomons	+A\$ 120
Tokelau	-A\$ 73
Tonga	-A\$ 372
Tuvalu	-A\$ 430
Vanuatu	-A\$ 218
Wallis and Futuna	-A\$ 720
Western Samoa	-A\$ 137
Guam	-A\$5 787

Source: South Pacific Commission, 1987.

Table III

1984: Intra-Regional Trade**Imports From:**

Australia	A\$778 000 000
New Zealand	A\$268 000 000
France	A\$443 000 000
U.K	A\$ 81 000 000
Other Europe	A\$191 000 000
U.S.A	A\$586 000 000
Japan	A\$519 000 000
Middle East	A\$ 22 000 000
Other Asia	A\$446 000 000
Other Countries	A\$582 000 000

Exports To:

Australia	A\$202 000 000
New Zealand	A\$ 61 000 000
France	A\$183 000 000
U.K	A\$214 000 000
Other Europe	A\$407 000 000
U.S.A	A\$357 000 000
Japan	A\$402 000 000
Middle East	A\$ 21 000 000
Other Asia	A\$193 000 000
Other Countries	A\$ 55 000 000

Source: South Pacific Commission, 1987.

Table IV

Percentage of Distribution of Aid to the Region (South Pacific Commission Region) by Donors for years 1982-1985.

Country	Average for 1982-1985
Australia	44.45
Canada	0.11
West Germany	0.17
France	10.54
Japan	3.03
New Zealand	3.09
Netherlands	0.17
United Kingdom	3.52
U.S.A	13.46
Asia Development Bank	3.03
European Econic Community	11.62
United Nations Development Programme	1.41
Others	5.39

Source: South Pacific Commission, 1987.

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