THE FUTURE OF SOUTH PACIFIC REGIONALISM

This paper was presented in
"The Pacific Islands in the Year 2000"
Seminar Series

October 29, 1984
East-West Center
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by

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This paper contains the text of an address given by Richard Herr, a professional associate and principal investigator for PIDP's Regional Cooperation Project, to an October 29, 1984, seminar in the series "The Pacific Islands in the Year." The series was jointly sponsored by the Pacific Islands Studies Program (University of Hawaii) and PIDP between September 10 and November 5, 1984. Dr. Herr was the seminar series convenor.
There is a widespread view in the South Pacific that regionalism will be expressed in the future by greater organizational simplicity than is currently the case. Not only is such a development expected, but also strenuous efforts have been made already to attain this objective. In particular, a substantial share of the efforts toward regionalism over the past decade has been devoted to establishing a single regional organization (SRO). Yet despite the activity and rhetoric in the direction of an SRO, I believe South Pacific regionalism in the year 2000 will be characterized by greater institutional diversity and thus by more organizations. Nevertheless, the proponents of an SRO will not be completely disappointed for the policymaking process governing these organizations will become more coherent and integrated and thus advance the most important aims of the SRO proposal, in part because of this diversification.

South Pacific Regionalism and Sovereignty

Central to this vision of the South Pacific's regional future is the assumption that regionalism is essentially concerned with intergovernmental relations. Its primary justification is the preservation and extension of state sovereignty. Whether there have been, or will be, unintended consequences that have supranational implications for regional integration is immaterial to this position. Both in motivation and in action the countries of the South Pacific, like most countries of the world, have supported the concept and practice of regionalism principally to secure their own national interests (which, of course, may be interpreted as short-term or long-term or both).

This explicitly state-centric model of regionalism carries with it some implicit assertions about the nature and the role of regionalism. Perhaps the most important of these for this assessment of the future is the rejection of the populist-based idealist, and the economic reductionist, views of regionalism. The former tends to regard regionalism as a mitigating device to moderate the divisive influences of sovereignty. The realists are inclined therefore to emphasize international nongovernmental
organizations (INGOs) as more effective building blocks to regional unity than intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) since these are putatively closer to "the people." The economic reductionists are not so much troubled by the morality of government as by the roots of its behavior. They perceive the forces of economics to underlie both domestic and international politics.

Although popular sentiments of commonality have been vital to establishing the scope and maintaining the level of regional activity in the South Pacific over the years, I regard this factor as largely instrumental to the actions of government. That is, to the extent that governments support regional INGOs, they do so to make their policies at the IGO level more effective and acceptable—not the reverse. This observation, however, cannot be taken as a denigration of work of INGOs in the region. Nor can it be regarded as a judgment based on the comparative operational efficiencies of nongovernmental organizations and IGOs. Rather it is an assessment of relative national priorities that helps to justify the focus on regional IGOs in this presentation.

Perhaps more a difficult explanation to put aside is that of the economic reductionists. The view that economic rationales underpin regional cooperation currently strikes a responsive chord in the South Pacific. Much of the demand for an SRO stems from the same principles to which the economic reductionists subscribe. Regional cooperation allows communities of countries to obtain collectively economic benefits that those states could not secure individually. Thus the economic reductionists allege that behind every political act (such as regional intergovernmental cooperation) there is an economic motive. The SRO proponents would not necessarily reduce all IGOs in the South Pacific to such a single cause, but they do tend to perceive the major elements of regionalism in fairly conventional, economic cost/benefit terms.

Superficially the record adds a verifying gloss to the economic reductionist interpretation. All the major IGOs established since World War II have been founded to achieve limited developmental (largely

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economic) goals. The South Pacific Commission (SPC), the Pacific Islands Producers' Association (PIPA), the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation (SPEC), the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), and the Coordinating Committee for Offshore Prospecting/South Pacific (COOP/SOPAC) would fit this mold, although two organizations—SPC and SPEC—have broadened their original responsibilities in the intervening years. In addition, two important bodies—the University of the South Pacific (USP) and Pacific Forum Line (PFL)—have been created both to contribute to the region's economic development and to achieve economies of scale in the provision of needed services.

Yet against this evidence must be weighed the countervailing data that the islands do not pay for anything like the major financial costs of regional organization. Thus reducing the justification for South Pacific regionalism to economic rationalism does not appear to be wholly tenable. The islands contribute only a minority of the budget to the major IGOs—the highest levels being reached in SPEC and FFA where, at least until recently, the islands were responsible for one-third of the assessed contributions. With extrabudgetary contributions and supplemental funds from nonisland contributors, however, the real levels have been probably nearer to 15 percent. (Since neither Australia nor New Zealand is considered an "island" in this paper, I am treating their contribution as "outside" donations even though they are members of virtually all the major regional IGOs.)

Of course, it could be argued that the economic justification for regionalism need not be limited solely to the associated states' capacity to pay for the collective goods and services acquired through regional cooperation. It may be sufficient that the organizational mechanism permits outside funding to be channeled into those purposes. Such an explanation, however, begs the question of why the outside donors would seek to strengthen regional relations in the South Pacific or why the islands would adopt a regional approach if the outside funding could be made available directly on a bilateral basis.
The reasons for funding may include economic benefits for the donor, but they are scarcely confined to this single purpose. They extend also to security interests, political access, humanitarianism, ideology, and the like. Such noneconomic factors may even lead to a reversal of conventional economic reasoning in specific cases, such as Australia's continuing assistance to the PFL despite the gravest economic doubts regarding this aspect of South Pacific regionalism. The islands too seek more than just economic advantages through their participation in regional cooperation. The creation of the Forum is the primary evidence of their wider concerns. Nevertheless, as I will argue here, even at the solely organizational level there are political justifications for pursuing less than optimally efficient (in economic terms) regional solutions to problems that might be treated bilaterally.

Therefore, without further belaboring this methodological point, I submit that the primary purpose of regionalism in the South Pacific today and in the immediate to intermediate future is to assist the small, isolated, and relatively disadvantaged island states to better enjoy the benefits, and more effectively discharge the duties, of sovereignty. Further, if the notion is rejected that "everything has a price" (such that all state activities can be reduced to a line entry in an accountant's ledger), the idea of sovereignty embraces more than a simplistic concept of economic viability. Given the threats to and the pressures and limitations on the islands' exercise of sovereignty noted by others during this series of seminars, regionalism may prove vital to the success of the islands as nations on the threshold of the twenty-first century. But to have this impact, regionalism itself must grow with the needs of the region.

With certain qualifications, I believe we will witness further growth in regionalism (including institutions), as well as increasing sophistication in the operation of South Pacific regional cooperation by the year 2000. The global trends of almost exponential growth in the numbers of IGOs since World War II may not be maintained by regional IGOs in the South Pacific, but specialization and regulatory control are likely
to ensure some growth. And, as previously suggested, the exigencies of managing this growth will enforce a more rigorous pattern of interorganizational cooperation that will be more complex and sophisticated than the existing pattern.

Rather than develop a complex matrix of possible arrangements based on a column of organizations and a row of interorganizational levels of complexity, I will collapse them into three basic scenarios of regionalism for the future. The three scenarios are presented in order of increasing probability.

**Scenario 1: Regionalism in Decline**

A decline scenario would arise should there be the same or fewer organizations with less complexity or fewer numbers with the same level of complexity by the year 2000. In any of these circumstances there would be some loss in the current levels of intergovernmental cooperation in the South Pacific. Given the present robustness of regionalism, such a decline seems unlikely and yet certain factors could bring about such a development.

One set of circumstances that conceivably could result in a reduced level of regionalism derives from the dynamics of current internal pressures on intergovernmental cooperation in the South Pacific. Such factors include the willingness of governments throughout the region to work together, the perceived viability of alternatives to regionalism, and the apparent success or failure of existing regional arrangements. All of these have arisen as problems at various times in the past, and they could reemerge with greater force in the future.

Perhaps the primary internal impediment to regional action has been the appeal of "subregionalism." This term has been used frequently as a euphemistic expression for ethnic division, particularly between the Melanesian and Polynesian areas of the South Pacific. Although such differences have been contained heretofore, it is possible that the attraction of greater integration into a Melanesian Alliance (including New
Caledonia), divergent security perspectives by the Polynesian states, the emergence of a larger Micronesian bloc, or other pressures might inhibit the willingness of the island nations to work together extensively on a region-wide basis. It is also imaginable that the less ethnically based type of subregionalism, as evidenced by the formation of the Nauru Agreement group within the FFA, could become more important if the logic of resource management should somehow concentrate all the advantages in a single subregional configuration. Again, one would expect regional institutions to suffer in such a circumstance since as with ethnic subregionalism, economic interest-based subregionalism would serve as an alternative to, rather than a source of additional strength for, the regional approach. The example of the Benelux group within European regionalism shows nevertheless that subregionalism need not be a threat to regional cooperation.

A second internal pressure has been the high level of bilateral assistance in the region. Bilateralism has greater appeal than regionalism for fairly explicable reasons. It gives more effective control to the recipient countries in the use of the aid especially for national development planning. Further, for some nations at least, direct government-to-government aid negotiations may be more productive in achieving desired levels of assistance.

A third possible pitfall for regionalism could be a domino effect resulting from the failure of a significant regional institution. Were the PFL or the SPC to collapse (in the case of the latter, recent political unrest in New Caledonia has added a new dimension of stress) or the USP to follow the pattern of Air Pacific, for example, a general loss of esteem for regional cooperation might ensue within the region. The remaining regional bodies then would be subject to more rigorous scrutiny and given less benefit of the doubt in marginal cases. Of course, such consequences would follow only if the collapse were to occur in untoward circumstances. Were the altered regional relationship to arise from a general agreement for a new course of action, the loss of an institution or a change in one's
status could herald improved regional ties.

In addition to these internal pressures, certain external developments could undercut South Pacific regionalism by the year 2000. Such developments might include political reabsorption, external manipulation of regional IGOS, and donor timidity. Although it may seem inconceivable to most observers that presently independent or self-governing states within the South Pacific would be willing to surrender their status for a more dependent one, some cynics doubt that the smaller entities will be able to cope with sovereignty over the long term. Should the most dire forebodings come to pass, a regional system based on sovereign or near-sovereign entities would be subject to serious stress because it would appear to be both less legitimate and less effective. Given that island states are unlikely to volunteer openly for such a fate, it seems probable that the reabsorption threat would be generated from outside the region by the misguided efforts of friendly states to relieve embattled island nations of some of the responsibilities of sovereignty.

The problem of external manipulation of a regional IGO is likely to arise only in the playing off of the SPC against the Forum-related agencies. Even here the problem could arise only if one of the three major non-Forum members of the SPC (i.e., Britain, France, and the United States) made the fundamental error of judgment of assuming that it would be possible to use the SPC as a lever against the Forum states. Some allege that this is occurring with the distant-water fishing nations (DWFNs) issue, but it appears that the current byplay is part of an overall negotiating strategy. Nonetheless, a miscalculation on the fisheries question or some other matter could result in a confrontation between the region's two major regional policy-making systems. Regardless of the victor, the controversy itself would probably reduce the level of regional cooperation.

The inhibiting influence of nonregional donor timidity would arise if the donor states upon which the current regional system is based were to support some organizations and ignore others for fear of giving offense to
certain islands. Such decisions, which appear already to have been made, could represent either an indirect effort by some regional states to use the donors to resolve the SRO question or a miscalculation by the donors of the regional states' expectations of them regarding the regional organizations. Either way, such a development could undermine the viability of an IGO dependent on donor assistance through a snowball effect and thus reduce the number of regional organizations.

Scenario 2: Static Regionalism

Change has been the hallmark of regionalism for the past 15 years, and thus it appears inconceivable that the next 15 years would find regionalism unaltered. The idea of stasis, however, has to be considered a relative term. In addition to embracing the situation of no significant change in the number or complexity of regional organizations, the scenario of static regionalism includes situations of greater numbers but less complexity and of reduced numbers with only moderately higher sophistication. Were the SRO question less entrenched, this scenario would have to be rated less probable than the prospects for decline. Nevertheless, there are elements that could produce relative stasis over an extended period of time.

Undoubtedly the most plausible internal factor would be a failure to resolve the SRO question, with the result that a consensus at the lowest common denominator continued. In this case, as we have seen in recent years, a philosophical commitment exists in some quarters to resist further expansion but the absence of agreement on the SRO prevents contraction. Thus the status quo would prevail for some time.

A second contributing factor may well be lost or preempted opportunities. Civil aviation is proving to be a classic case here. It was once stated categorically, perhaps in the early blush of national independence or the great hopes held for island cooperation, that the development of a regional approach to civil aviation would be the acid test for South Pacific regionalism. Yet events have tended to move this issue farther and farther from the regional arena. Given the growth in
partnerships between the island airlines and rim country airlines (particularly Australia's Ansett and QANTAS airlines), one could even regard the matter as being firmly in the bilateral camp. Should this pattern become more general, there may be fewer opportunities for the islands to pursue regional cooperation.

Externally two sets of influences could combine to maintain the present status quo. The donors, which pay the larger share of the costs of regionalism, may decline to support any further expansion. Concurrently the external members of the SPC may discourage any reduction in regionalism, at least within the SPC system. The impasse might then make continuance of present arrangements relatively attractive to all parties.

Scenario 3: Increased Regional Cooperation

If the decline scenario involves an unlikely denial of the advantages of specialization and institutionalized control that are associated with IGOs and if stasis raises the almost equally unexpected possibility of a plateau in the perceived utility of regionalism, one is obliged to consider the prospect of an increase in regionalism with some seriousness. A greater use of regionalism need not imply merely a growth in the numbers of IGOs. The increase scenario could arise from a more sophisticated use of existing bodies, the establishment of replacement institutions, or even fewer organizations. It could also derive from a transfer of greater authority to more, the same number, or fewer numbers of IGOs. In the final analysis, the net result would be a higher level of coordinated policymaking by the island states.

In any event, I believe the increased use of regionalism in the South Pacific by the year 2000 will occur in all these facets of regional cooperation. There will be more IGOs, a more complex use of those bodies (including higher levels of interorganizational integration), and a greater level of authority for at least some of them.

The conclusion that there will be more rather than fewer organizations stems from three premises. First, the areas of policy over which island

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countries are expected to exercise sovereign authority are widening. The oceans, the environment, illicit drugs, and similar resources and problems have not only been added to national agendas in recent years but have also been given high priority. Second, the Forum countries have resisted investing their regional organs with omnibus responsibility, preferring rather to maintain relatively limited functional bodies. Related to this is the third premise, that specialized (i.e., functionally coherent) bodies are easier to control and administer. Such bodies are also easier for external donors to fund. Thus there will be pressures to establish new regional IGOs to aid the island governments in meeting obligations that can be subject to regional solutions but are beyond the governments' national or existing regional resources.

Nevertheless, as the SRO qualms underscore, the creation of additional organizations is not a popular or trusted response to such pressure. One would expect other options to be pursued wherever possible—informal coordination, bilateralism, and global institutions (the United Nations system)—to list some of the more commonly used alternatives. As for regional options, the existing organizations are also likely to be used both more extensively and more intensively. The former is already occurring as evidenced, for example, by the continually broadening program base of SPEC. This development has its risks, however, especially should SPEC programs be so diversified that they become bogged down in execution, to the detriment of an interagency coordinating role. Although embryonic, the more intensive use of existing organizations will also increase.

The area of marine resources provides grounds for speculation on the emergence of regional IGOs responsible for a fairly specialized area. The FPA presently limits its activities largely to the economic management of a single resource. Its primary focus has been to maximize the economic returns for the island coastal states from DWFNs entering the Pacific tuna fishery. However, this restrictive approach can last only as long as the fishery is underexploited. When fully utilized, the FPA is almost inevitably doomed to accept a wider mandate for scientific management of
the stock and thus to assume a new set of appropriate duties related to regulation of effort, gear, entry, and the like. Similarly COOP/SOPAC, which has adopted a predominantly scientific and technical stance toward marine mineral resources, can be expected to amplify this role as the coastal states seek to develop or to admit others to their offshore resources. It would not be surprising to find by the year 2000 that COOP/SOPAC and the FFA had become two arms of a single Pacific Islands marine resources agency that would provide expertise, advice, and coordinative leadership on a wide range of oceanic issues.

The attempt to limit the growth of regional institutions may lead to more extensive and intensive use of existing bodies, but there can be little doubt that it will also encourage greater interinstitutional cooperation. To date, this aspect of regionalism in the South Pacific has been perceived mainly in negative terms. Organizations have tended to interact in the main to prevent duplication of effort. As will be argued in this paper, the more positive benefits of interorganizational cooperation are likely to become more apparent, particularly in the area of shared or joint programs.

As already indicated, stronger regionalism in the year 2000 may occur with the granting of greater authority to regional institutions. By this I mean that we will observe at least the precursory steps toward supranational power in the region. Supranational authority arises when an IGO is invested with the power to make binding regulations on individuals or groups within its ambit and/or when the IGO has the capacity to levy imposts for its own use without having to refer back to the national authority of its members. To date this type of authority is almost exclusively associated with the European Communities and is nowhere to be found in the South Pacific.

Nevertheless, it is conceivable that some discretionary, regulatory authority will be conferred on some agencies in the not-too-distant future. The power is likely to be highly circumscribed, but even the preliminary steps would be significant. Unlike the European experience, where
supranationalism was part of a grand design, the move toward supranationalism in the South Pacific is more likely to appear as a pragmatic response to a discrete regional management need. For example, the FFA might be given the power to set binding catch limits, to regulate gear usage, and perhaps even to restrict entry without referral to member governments. It is even possible that the FFA will have the power to set its own charges to help finance its operations through such devices as a licensing surcharge. And, if this could occur for the FFA, similar developments could be plausibly entertained for other agencies.

A Coherent Regional System

Should the third scenario of increased regional cooperation be realized, one still might question whether or not it would in fact assist the islands in protecting and projecting their sovereignty. After all, more IGOs would mean more costs, more nonnationals responsible for areas of national interest, and, granting supranational authority, a direct reduction of national control. All of these are genuine risks (as others not listed may be), but they are not unmitigated ones.

One cannot make the question of costs disappear merely by rejecting the regional IGO solution. Since the areas of proposed IGO activity will presumably involve matters requiring the individual states to accept responsibility in any case, costs of one sort or another will have to be borne. On one hand, nations may choose to ignore the area and thus bear as a cost the lost opportunities or denied responsibility. On the other, they may address the issues and finance the expense through bilateral aid, internal transfers from existing programs to the new area of concern, or some similar mechanism. Multilateralism therefore only changes the method of dealing with these costs.

Rather than exacerbating the islands’ financial liability, regional cooperation may even lend itself to ameliorating these costs. It can provide for economic redistribution to help the less advantaged members of the regional community by giving them access to assistance that they would
not otherwise obtain, even though the more advantaged countries may have less need of the assistance themselves. Regionalism also diffuses the impact of most IGOs' dependence on external assistance by diversifying the range of donors and minimizing the political leverage of individual donors. This can help to reduce the political risks of neocolonialism inherent in over-reliance on bilateralism.

The question of personality as a factor in regional decision making cannot be sidestepped, and indeed every senior-level personnel change in a regional IGO raises the issue of geographic (subregional) balance. A greater diversity of organization would make the political necessity of geographic balance easier to achieve while helping to reduce the anxiety felt over filling the occasional vacant positions in today's system.

Supranationality is unlikely to become a genuine problem before the turn of the century. To the extent that it becomes salient, it can be expected to arise in the context of a more coherent and disciplined regional policymaking process in the South Pacific.

The rhetoric of the SRO controversy has been liberally sprinkled with expressions of concern over duplication, overlap, waste, coordinated aid, external influence, and the like. When distilled down to its essence, the desire for an SRO is grounded in a wish to maximize the political authority of the islands at the lowest practicable cost. I have dealt with the rationale of the SRO elsewhere and thus will not review it here. Yet it should be noted that despite the "decolonization" of national institutions, the colonial origin of the SPC remains the major impetus for and obstacle to the putative benefits of an SRO. This problem epitomizes the current state of South Pacific regionalism.

The growth of regionalism has been unstructured and undisciplined, notwithstanding the emergence of the SRO issue in the second half of the 1970s. In this respect the South Pacific is scarcely different from any other section of the world except Western Europe. Even with the growing concern for this topsy-turvy growth, however, there has been a reluctance in many quarters to consider a blueprint for incremental regional
development—that is, a plan for gradual progress toward a coherent regional system. There are of course reasons for this hesitancy. For some, the SRO issue requires an immediate solution and therefore gradualism is unacceptable; for others, it is a rejection of planning for regional integration; and for still others, the question is integration itself.

It is difficult to debate the subjective judgments on the urgency of IGOs in the South Pacific although the record of the SRO controversy shows in practice that more time has been available than critics expected. The recent pronouncements suggest that haste will continue to be made slowly on this matter. Reactions against developing a plan for regionalism appear to stem from a belief that the European experience of regionalism is irrelevant to the South Pacific. Yet this substitutes piety for good sense. Although the pattern of the blueprint may be inappropriate, having a plan or vision is scarcely a Eurocentric notion in itself. And of course there are any number of models of regional integration; a greater degree of policy coordination does not require higher levels of structural integration.

It may well be that the present phase of the SRO question will produce steps toward a plan for a coherent regional policymaking process. The 1980 joint Forum/SPC review offered an elaborate institutional proposal, but it did not accommodate all the differing political positions nor did it provide a detailed blueprint for implementing the proposed SRO. Should the current review (the four ministers' enquiry) choose to recommend a pattern for the future, its proposals are more likely to emphasize general policy coordination than the narrower organizational features of the 1980 review. Its report then should approximate a plan for regional development if not a precise blueprint.

The characteristics of a more clearly articulated vision of South Pacific regionalism may be indistinct at the margins, but at least three central elements will be crucial. The regional policymaking process, if it is to be coherent and disciplined, will have to be authoritative, cover the entire region (i.e., most if not all the ambit of the SPC), and be flexible.
enough to be adaptive. The recognized sticking points on the SRO issue heretofore have involved the first two characteristics: the Forum agencies have the authority to make effective policy but only the SPC can apply its (limited) decisions to the whole region. It may transpire, however, that the third trait, flexibility, will provide a passage between the Charybdis of geographic inadequacy and the Scylla of political impotence.

Much of the substantive energies of South Pacific regionalism have been absorbed in recent years in the development of specific regimes. A regime is a discrete, largely self-contained set of rules, practices, and organizations focusing on the control of a particular issue. Some current examples include fisheries, the environment, nuclear material, trade relations, and oceanic minerals expressed in part in manifestations such as FFA, the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP), the nuclear-free zone proposal (NFZ), the South Pacific Area Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement (SPARTECA), and CCOP/SOPAC. Regimes, being specific-purpose arrangements, are not especially flexible in themselves, but they do provide for enormous adaptivity within a regional system. As the examples reveal, not all regimes require a separate organizational expression. As each regime is discrete, the development of any particular one can include as many interested parties as is appropriate without necessarily making these external participants a permanent fixture of the general regional policymaking process. Further, the independently structured character of regimes allows a series of problems to be addressed simultaneously, at speeds, and with various approaches. Thus such regimes tend to mitigate the linkage aspects of problem resolution when disparate questions are treated through a single multilateral arena.

Taken too literally, this observation could be deemed a defense of the existing multiple IGO arrangements, as well as making a virtue of necessity. Such is not my intention, however. If regime management is to be an effective solution to some regional problems, it would be desirable for the regimes themselves to be supportive of regional aspirations that in turn are coherent. Interestingly, regimes may be contributing as much
toward bringing the regional decision-making process together as they are to expressing the results of agreements reached.

Since the rationale for an officially apolitical SPC is the existence of dependencies and since the first principle of the Forum is political authority, neither body can merge with the other at the moment without making an unacceptable compromise. Nevertheless, as evidenced by SPREP, the two general policymaking systems can work together, maximizing their respective strengths rather than their separate weaknesses, to develop and execute a specific regime. It is to be hoped that a similar pattern will be possible for fisheries and other management issues. As these regimes overlap and interlock, they will help not only to reinforce the validity of the regional approach but also to integrate the policymaking process that gave rise to the regimes.

The ties among the various regional IGOs, which arise from developing and subsequently implementing a regime such as SPREP, require additional interaction among those bodies that ramifies the formal consultations made at the senior secretariat level. Such connections arising from shared responsibilities will continue to mesh the activities and the personnel of the several bodies in common endeavors. Thus even though the present bifurcated approach (Forum and SPC) is likely to continue for a number of years, there will be gradual but perceptible movement toward common organs.

The policymaking processes will then have to deal with an increasingly interconnected system of regional IGOs. More interorganizational direction for the joint programs and projects is already producing improved executive communication among the governing authorities, and this trend can be expected to continue. It is to be hoped, however, that those bodies will not merely react to the flow of events. Much could be done even now to harmonize of regional policymaking.

If the proponents of the SRO accept an incremental path to their goal, it will be possible to actively facilitate interorganizational cooperation. The ground can be prepared by establishing ex officio relationships among the senior administrative levels of the various regional IGOs (a measure
accepted by the Sixteenth South Pacific Conference in 1976), formal personnel exchanges and common terms and conditions of employment (at least within broad guidelines), and compatible retirement schemes. Such changes would encourage interorganizational cooperation and also remove some anxieties whenever a new regional body was created.

Since the value of functionally limited meetings and organizations derives from the expertise of specialization, few advantages can be gained from reducing the efficiency of such meetings and bodies by having them undertake more general duties. With better information about proposed meetings, it may be possible to save for some functional gatherings, but these economies are likely to be minor. More important would be the coordination of the general policy meetings. At an early Forum meeting it was proposed that the Forum meet again shortly before the South Pacific Conference as a sort of privy council to the Conference. The idea lapsed owing to a political accident, but it still has some merit.

Were the Forum and the Conference to meet at common venues and with proximate timing, the connections between the two policymaking processes could be greatly enhanced. The savings on common secretarial services and meeting facilities would probably be small but real nevertheless. More importantly, the arrangement would facilitate sharing of views on respective agendas and matters of mutual interest. Although the Forum would take the lead in all matters of high politics and major policy, the South Pacific Conference would not come to such an arrangement empty-handed. In addition to enhancing the geographic comprehensiveness of the Conference membership, the Conference draws together the major donors, international actors, and interested parties involved in the region.

The logic of a closer policy relationship between the Forum and the Conference raises several political issues, but by and large they are less important than those posed by the setting of policy for an SRO. For the moment, however, the benefits of a more integrated policymaking process will probably not be as persuasive as the immediate exigency of protecting the Forum and its agencies from a dilution of political authority. Under
the present circumstances the SRO alternative would raise this specter as a genuine possibility. Recognition of this risk has been a major influence on the course of the SRO debate in recent years.

Yet for whatever the overt reasons, the regional policymaking process will be more unified and coherent by the year 2000. A merger, even de facto rather than de jure, may be too much to expect between the Forum and the Conference, but a close working arrangement will be operating. The policies that result will be implemented through specialized agencies, not all of which will be formally linked. Nevertheless common organs will exist to facilitate and execute interorganizational cooperation. Central to this system will be the Forum's secretariat, since it will be the primary agency for coordination; but to undertake this role efficiently SPEC will need to be divested of some of its more technical responsibilities. Some of those responsibilities will go to functionally appropriate specialized agencies; others are likely to go to a more general body, probably a somewhat restyled SPC having direct linkages to the Forum system.

Concomitantly with these changes, the member states will revise their internal procedures for handling their regional responsibilities. The departments of foreign affairs will ensure that there will be not only greater personnel continuity and internal policy control but also, given the anticipated role of specialized agencies, greater use of interdepartmental committees to coordinate the various line departments operating directly with their respective functional IGOs. More effective methods for monitoring the work of the IGOs will be in use so that member states will be able to avoid unintended duplication of effort. (The deliberate playing off of bilateral and multilateral donors will not disappear, however, although it is likely to require more sophisticated methods in future.)

The donors and other external interests will be affected by such changes. Some states and agencies will upgrade or otherwise improve their participation in the advisory committees of specialized regional IGOs and
will take a greater interest in the meetings to draft particular management regimes. Observer status at SPC and SPEC meetings will carry more weight. It is also likely that some external interests may seek entry merely to get a foot in the door before it is too late. Such reactions could assist the islands in furthering their regional control because they would have the opportunity to help shape the form of and the mechanisms through which the external interests developed their involvement in South Pacific regionalism.

Concluding Remarks

Speculation scarcely lends itself to concrete conclusions. Thus I end merely with a few concluding remarks on South Pacific regionalism in the year 2000. Regionalism is important to the Pacific Islands. It can help even the weakest sovereign and near-sovereign states to exercise more effectively the rights and responsibilities of their political status. The dependencies are advantaged by having a say in the affairs of their neighborhood, by developing wider external contacts, and even by experiencing a form of praxis or political apprenticeship that will assist their further constitutional development. The economic benefits to all members of the region should not be gainsaid, but the dimensions of regionalism cannot be constrained to this one factor. Security and political, legal, diplomatic, social, and other advantages are also associated with effective regionalism, and at times any one of these may be even more important than the other rationales combined.

Will South Pacific regionalism become more effective in the future? As I have suggested throughout this paper, I believe the answer will be yes. Bilateralism is too fraught with the dangers of neocolonialism to be the only substantial solution to the islands' development problems. Globalism, as expressed through the United Nations system, would undermine the elements of South Pacific control by incorporating the islands' involvement in multilateral solutions into a larger framework were it used too extensively (unless a new UN organization were established to serve the SPC
region and this became a substitute for local initiative). National self-reliance does not appear to be an option for all nations, and yet major national failures among some in the islands' community would pose risks for all. Thus regionalism has a genuine role to play in the international network of the South Pacific.

Not only does regionalism have a role to play but also this role will become more prominent and clearly defined by the year 2000, I believe. The declining regionalism scenario is certainly not beyond the pale as a possibility, but it would require a greater willingness on the part of both local and external countries to risk regional instability than we have witnessed to date. Given little change in the international climate, it is more conceivable that the present balance of forces will maintain the status quo in South Pacific regionalism; nonetheless it is difficult to believe that such an equilibrium could endure to the end of the century. Hence the judgment that we will see an increase in the use of regionalism.

My depiction of the influences that would shape the growth scenario and of the characteristics that would emerge from it has been derived from present indicators that I regard as significant. Since there are pressures for a quick solution to the SRO question and since it is always possible for states to redefine their operating premises at any time, the incremental, step-by-step unfolding of a more intricate and disciplined regional policy-making process may never occur. It is possible that informal mechanisms will make up the bulk of the expansion if the antipathy to regional IGOs proves more substantive than rhetorical, contrary to my expectations. Nevertheless, I have no doubts that a student entering the twenty-first century will find South Pacific regionalism a lively and current thesis topic and that the student will not be looking back to the 1970s and '80s as the high point of regional cooperation.
Endnotes

1 The idea for an SRO was apparently first mooted in the report of the 1976 Aid Review Task Force that was initiated by the South Pacific Forum through SPEC. Many of the same concerns were responsible for a review of the SPC, also done in 1976. In 1979 SPEC carried out a further study (based on a two-year delayed consideration of the 1976 report), that in turn gave rise to a Forum proposal for a joint Forum/SPC study. The 19th South Pacific Conference agreed and the Joint Regional Arrangements Committee composed of representatives from three Forum members and three Conference members deliberated and reported in 1980. SPEC prepared a further paper on the SRO in 1982 following up the proposals of the 1980 joint study. Last year (1984) a team of four foreign ministers from the Forum countries again tackled the issue, and it appears certain their work will continue in 1985.

2 Despite its prominence in regional affairs, the South Pacific Forum has not been included in the list of IGOs because it is not technically an IGO.


4 The only exception here is that Australia has not become a member of COOP/SOPAC, although it is a major contributor. New Zealand's position in COOP/SOPAC, however, may be affected as a result of the May 1984 change in this IGO's status.

5 This bloc within the FFA was formed by treaty in 1982 to give greater bargaining strength to the western countries with major tuna resources: Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Kiribati, Marshalls, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, and Solomons.

6 "Institutional Sources of Stress in Pacific Regionalism" (Honolulu: Pacific Islands Studies Working Papers, University of Hawaii, 1980) and "SRO or SRS: Whither the South Pacific?" (Honolulu: Pacific Islands Development Program, East-West Center, 1984).


8 The Spring 1982 issue of *International Organization* (volume 36, number 2) is devoted entirely to the question of international regimes and
provides useful references for both sides of the debate on this topic.

9 I have outlined the arguments for this interpretation in my paper "SRO or SRS: Whither the South Pacific?"
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