UNU-CRIS Occasional Papers

0-2004/12

Regional Governance, Peace and Security in the Pacific: A Case for Give and Take

By

William Sutherland*

* Faculty of Arts, Australian National University

Regional Governance, Peace and Security in the Pacific:
A Case for Give and Take

William Sutherland

The record on Pacific regionalism[1] suggests cautious optimism about the prospects for better provision of public goods in the face of increasing globalization. Contradictions, especially cultural ones, between Pacific Island realities and global imperatives remain but can be addressed more effectively if there is more give and take between the Islands and their development partners, especially donors. More particularly, there is need for more give on the part of donors. I develop this case in relation to regional-co-operation.

Since the 1990s the Islands have been compelled to undertake extensive reforms, and not without justification, but donors have insisted on a model of development that is fraught with difficulty. The result is a problematic dynamic that risks outcomes antithetical to the interests of both sides and yet a win-win outcome is possible. For that there is a need for greater economic realism, openness and inclusiveness by the Islands but a greater need on the part of donors to make their policies and assistance more sensitive and responsive to Island conditions. For both there is a need to re-think and reconfigure relations between them in a way that would be more conducive to achieving what, I argue, is ultimately at stake – regional peace and security.

There is a bargain to be made and, in the end, the political-economic calculus is straightforward. For the Islands, the question is: what can they offer that other similar regions cannot and are they prepared to take the necessary action to make that offer difficult, if not impossible, to refuse? For donors, the question is: are they prepared to allow and support a more suitable development model for the Islands and thus enhance the prospects for the better provision of public goods there, including greater

---

[1] Regional co-operation in the Pacific began with the formation of the South Pacific Commission, now called the Pacific Community, in 1948, well before independence came to the Pacific Islands. This paper is concerned with regional co-operation between independent Pacific Island countries (PICs), which began in 1971 with the formation of the South Pacific Forum, now called the Pacific Islands Forum.

regional and therefore global peace and security without which donor countries stand to lose far more than the Islands.

Framed in this way, these questions reveal the argument of this paper, which I develop by first describing the regime of regional governance, its effectiveness in the 1970s and 1980s, and the reasons for change in the 1990s. In the second section I track the shift to a new regional governance regime following the adoption of a regional reform agenda initiated and driven largely by donors although with support from some Island elites.

Against that background, section three shows how the pursuit of regional peace and security has recently come to occupy central place in Pacific regionalism and I argue that the contributions of the Island governments, despite their limited capacities, have entailed a degree of compromise that demands reciprocation by donors. But regional peace and security ultimately depends on the co-operation of civil society and in the final section I make the case for greater involvement of civil society in regional governance, the vital need for donors to make such involvement possible, and I offer suggestions on how they might do that.

Regionalism the 'Pacific Way'

The starting point of my argument is the limited capacities of Pacific Island countries (PICs). Constrained not only by problems they share with other small developing island countries, they also face additional ones unique to them. These have to do the immensely larger geographical space over which they are spread; their indigenous populations, which in the Melanesian countries are ethnically diverse; and the critical importance of traditional culture. Between traditional and Western cultures are major contradictions: collective versus individual proprietary rights; customary versus Western law; the primacy of group over individual welfare; deference to traditional authorities (chiefs, men, elders) versus open dialogue; and the priority of communal obligations over individual advancement. Together these factors present a unique mix of problems and contradictions that require a fuller appreciation of Island complexities and appropriately tailored responses.

A key underpinning of Pacific regionalism is the 'Pacific Way', a long contested notion based on the idea of the "traditional way of life". Alongside disagreements over the authenticity of tradition is a strongly held view that the Pacific Way is an elite ideology that has served as a smokescreen for the defence of elite privilege and the smothering of popular discontent (Keesing, 1989; Lawson, 1995, Hufer and Aso'fou, 2000). That debate raises questions about this paper's apparently heavy focus on inter-state relations. That focus, however, is not intended to analytically privilege the state over other social categories, particularly civil society. Nor, at the practical level, is it to deny the importance of civil society in regional co-operation.

And there are many examples of this, especially with regard to religion (Pacific Conference of Churches), the media (Pacific Islands New Association and Pacific Islands Broadcasting Association), trade unionism (South Pacific Council of Trade Unions) and regional peace and security (Pacific Concerns Resource Centre). Indeed, as indicated above, a central part of my argument is precisely the need for greater involvement of civil society in regional co-operation between states, particularly in the leading intergovernmental body, the Pacific Islands Forum.

Constituted at head of government level, the Pacific Islands Forum comprises fourteen Pacific Island states[2], Australia and New Zealand. When formed in 1971 it adopted an informal style based on the 'Pacific Way'. There were no formal rules for the conduct of its meetings, and that is still the case today. The Forum quickly emerged as the premier regional body and, not surprisingly, its modus operandi inspired regional organizations already in existence as well as those that followed later. However, the inherently bureaucratic nature of formal institutions meant that the informality of the Forum could not extend fully to regional organizations. Nevertheless, it became an important principle of their governance.

But informality is only one aspect of the Forum style. A second is that it is draws heavily on Island 'tradition'. Notwithstanding the important qualifications made above, there is widespread agreement that across the Islands are traditions that have common features and it is these that the Forum drew upon. Among these are shared principles of engagement (consultation, consensus, unhurried decision-making, taking

care not to cause offence and resolution of disputes by diplomacy rather than adversarial contest) as well as core values (collective well-being, mutual respect, reciprocity, sensitivity to individual conditions). These too informed in a fundamental way the governance of regional organizations. This is reflected, for example, by the requirement in the establishing agreement of the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) that the work of its governing body be conducted "on the basis of consensus of all Members, taking into account the practices and procedures of the South Pacific region".[3] It is also reflected in the functioning of the umbrella regional body, the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific (CROP), which was formed in 1988 to minimise duplication and improve co-ordination between regional organizations.

A third feature of the Forum's modus operandi is voluntarism, which for the purposes of this paper, is the most important. The formation of the Forum was motivated by the belief that national development required supplementation by regional cooperation. National development was hampered by the Islands' limited capacities that, importantly, varied. A regional regime that did not take such variation into account would not work. Accordingly, implementation of undertakings by Forum members was, with a few exceptions, voluntary. But such a soft compliance regime could continue only as long as the Island leverage (which I describe later) that made it possible in the first place remained. From the late 1980s, that leverage was progressively eroded and the reasons for that led also to a push for a stronger compliance regime. Before discussing that critical development I survey the record on of the first two decades of co-operation.

Table 1 below shows the range of areas covered by the eight major regional organizations. The record on their performance is uneven but generally good. How much they contributed to the provision of public goods, however, cannot be determined because their contributions were more indirect than direct. Specific projects delivered concrete outcomes (installation of units for solar energy, upgrading of airport navigational systems and improved shipping services, for example) but the

---

[2] Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Nauru, Niue, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.
[3] Article 4.3(a), Agreement Establishing the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme. Available at http://sedac.ciesin.org/pidb/texts/acrc/SPEnviro.txt.html

great bulk of organizational contributions took the form of technical assistance for institutional and human resource capacity building. This produced some major achievements, the standout being the 1987 multilateral fisheries access agreement with the United States concluded under the auspices of the Forum Fisheries Agency. But there were failures as well, the doomed attempt at forming a regional airline being the best example. To a lesser extent, even the 1980 South Pacific Regional Economic Co-operation and Trade Agreement (SPARTECA) can, by its own objectives, be seen as a failure. The huge trade imbalances between Forum Island Countries (FICs) on the one hand and Australia and New Zealand on the other that SPARTECA was supposed to correct still exist.

Table 1: Pacific Regional Organizations

Organization	Establishing Agreement Year	Mandated areas of work
Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)	1948	Agriculture, health, education, fisheries
University of the South Pacific (USP)	1968	Tertiary education
Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (Forum Secretariat)	1973	Regional policy (and until 1976 shipping, civil aviation, energy and telecommunications)
Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA)	1979	Fisheries
South Pacific Tourism Organization (SPTO)	1980	Tourism
Pacific Islands Development Program (PIDP)	1980 (no establishing agreement)	Development policy research
South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)	1993	Environment
South Pacific Geoscience Commission (SOPAC)	1995	Non-living marine resources

The reasons for this uneven record on regionalism in the first two decades are too numerous to consider here but it is worth noting that at various times regional co-operation was tested, sometimes severely, by tensions around the distributive outcomes of co-operation. The benefits of regional co-operation, many felt, were unevenly spread and tensions around this were a key reason for the sub-regional tendencies that surfaced in the 1980s and were perceived as threats. But the regional

enterprise survived. Moreover, what most observers agree was essentially limited functional co-operation edged closer towards regional integration in the 1990s. That shift was primarily the consequence of global changes and embedded in it was the need for a more compelling, compliance-inducing regime of regional governance than was possible under the Pacific Way.

Global imperatives and the new way

The existing regime was possible largely for two reasons: the Islands' special ties with Australia and New Zealand and, more importantly, the region's strategic importance. In the 1990s, that leverage was severely eroded. The end of the Cold War removed the strategic dividend and tighter limits were placed on Australian and New Zealand goodwill as a result of domestic pressures there, especially budgetary ones. The Islands therefore had to adjust to the new conditions. Donors feared, however, that reform would not be forthcoming without their encouragement and insistence - encouragement because of continuing cultural sensitivities and post-colonial political fears of neo-colonialism, particularly on the part of Australia and New Zealand; and insistence because the evidence suggested that, left to their own devices, the Islands were unlikely to reform, at least not with the speed and scope that donors wished to see.

Bilateral relations were one avenue through which to effect change but a reform agenda developed and driven at the regional level would be less susceptible to political and cultural sensitivities. That, together with aid and trade as sources of enormous leverage, offered donors a less problematic way of securing not only Island commitments to reform but compliance with them as well. The regional reform agenda that lay ahead would significantly alter the trajectory of Pacific regionalism in terms of not only substantive direction but also the nature of regional governance.

The effectiveness of the reform agenda depended critically on two related factors: where responsibility for it would lie, and the capacity of donors to exercise influence at that site. The obvious candidate was the Forum. As the peak body for the formulation of regional policy, it had the necessary weight of authority that other

regional bodies lacked. In addition, its two most powerful members, Australia and New Zealand, were also major donors. But other donors, especially the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, European Union, US and Japan, also had a strong interest in the region. A formal arrangement to integrate them into the Forum machinery was therefore necessary and duly emerged in 1989 with the establishment of the Post-Forum Dialogue with Development Partners.

Through the Forum and Post-Forum Dialogue, donors laid the groundwork for the reform agenda, a five-year process I have described elsewhere (Sutherland, 2000). As justifications for reform, donors pointed especially to the impending end of the Cold War, developments in the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations and the move towards a single European market. But closer to home were other compelling reasons that had to do with the Islands' poor economic performance. That poor record, despite the high levels of per capita aid, led the World Bank in 1993 to coin the term the 'Pacific Paradox' (World Bank, 1993). Soon afterwards in Australia the 'Pacific Paradox' became the 'doomsday scenario' because of growing population pressures in the Islands. Now more resolute about the need for change, donors became more interventionist. The Pacific Way still held sway. Donors still have to show sensitivity but the Islands were about to experience a growing level of donor insistence. Aid and trade would serve as both carrot and stick.

The regional reform agenda was initiated by Australia when it hosted the Forum in 1994. Its scope was initially limited to economic reforms but later became progressively wider. The key to success of the reform agenda was effective implementation and to that end, donors adopted a three-pronged approach: seeking from the Islands increasingly specific and time-bound commitments; tying assistance to performance; and monitoring compliance through voluntary, annual reporting. The first two worked well, the third less so. As a result, donors were not always clear about or were dissatisfied with the extent or effectiveness of implementation in the Islands.

In 2002, therefore, a crucial decision was taken to rationalize and stiffen the compliance regime. The Forum Economic Ministers Meeting (FEMM), created to oversee the development and implementation the reform agenda, decided that

thenceforth members would submit biennial stocktakes of progress on reform (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2002a). That decision was based on the recommendations of a major report that reviewed the implementation of reforms between 1997 and 2001(Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2002b). Comprehensive and detailed, the report identified some major achievements and judged that, on the whole, the Islands were "highly successful" in their implementation of reforms. However, it also identified "areas for further action" as well as "impediments and constraints to implementation", including some in relation to donors (ibid., 4-8).

The adoption of biennial stocktakes is another step forward towards a stronger compliance-inducing regime. Envisaged are single documents that report in a more thorough way than previously on implementation across the whole range of reforms – public sector, trade, investment, financial, and good governance. At this stage, the stocktakes are voluntary but peer and donor pressure will doubtless ensure that this more probing and systematic monitoring mechanism will elicit the higher compliance that donors seek. If it does not, a more obligatory mechanism, which some would have preferred, may well emerge in the future. Were that to happen, its advocates will have precedents on which to draw: one in fisheries; the other, more significantly, in trade.

In 2000 what is commonly referred to as the 'Tuna Convention'[4] was signed. It is not a Convention of the Forum but the signatories to it include Forum members. Importantly, other signatories include distant water fishing nations, notably the US and Japan. That, together with the fact that the mandate of the Convention is wider than that of the Convention of the Forum Fisheries Agency, shows that distant water fishing nations, long displeased at their exclusion from membership of the Forum Fisheries Agency, have finally succeeded in their longstanding effort to be centrally involved in the management of Pacific fisheries. Not surprisingly, the Tuna Convention establishes a legally enforceable rules-based regime complete with explicit obligations[5]; compliance and enforcement requirements, including the

---

[4] The official name is The Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Available at http://www.oceanlaw.net/texts/westpac.htm
[5] Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific, Part IV

provision of annual statements of compliance measures[6]; sanctions[7]; and a formal mechanism for dispute settlement[8].

In 2001 the Islands took their first step towards regional economic integration and full integration into the international economy. The Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA)[9] adopted in that year came into effect in 2003. Its objective is to progressively liberalize goods trade between the Pacific Islands over ten years with a view to establishing a free trade area. Significantly, Article 19 allows for extension of the scope of the Agreement to trade in services, "in the long term" as the Forum Secretariat put it, and the movement of capital and labour, again "at some point" in the future (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat Trade and Investment Division, n.d.: 9).

The hope is that PICTA will boost intra-regional trade beyond its current low level (about 2% of regional trade), encourage specialization and greater efficiency, increase exports and competitiveness, and attract increased investment. But there are doubts about the likelihood of these objectives being met, let alone the wider trend towards greater liberalization of which PICTA is the latest expression. These doubts, some of which were recently considered in relation to the post-Cotonou process in the Pacific (Thomas, 2002), have to do with, among other things, the region's transport problems; institutional weaknesses; low levels of industrialization; modest market of 6 million mainly poor people; and potential tariff and job losses. These, together with concerns about the much higher level of competitiveness in rival developing economies, especially in Asia, and continuing protectionism in industrialized countries, reduces the potential of PICTA.

But all this aside, in terms of the argument of this paper, the point is that in response to enormous pressure the Islands have taken a step towards economic integration and in so doing have reinforced the wider trend towards a stronger compliance-inducing regime of regional governance.

---

[6] Ibid., Part VI
[7] Ibid., Article 25.8
[8] Ibid., Part IX
[9] Available at www.forumsec.org,fj

Like the Tuna Convention, PICTA establishes a legally enforceable regime complete with obligations, dispute resolution mechanisms and sanctions. Significantly, as a first principle, disputes are to be settled amicably and consultations are to be "undertaken with appropriate regard to the relevant cultural values and customary procedures for resolving differences in the Pacific region"[10]. Should the 'Pacific Way' not work, a process of mediation is mandated[11]. If that too fails, the parties must submit to arbitration[12], the requirements of which are set out in Annex V of the Agreement which in turn mandates the application of principles consistent with, *inter alia*, relevant international law and due process[13]. The outcome of arbitration is binding and sanctions are available to aggrieved parties[14].

Clearly, the Pacific Way still operates but not as strongly as previously. The trend towards a stronger, more obligatory regime of regional governance is unmistakeable and how much further the region moves down that track remains to be seen. The point here, however, is that PICTA is further evidence that when the Islands have been asked to give, they have. And they have been asked to give even more.

Developed in tandem with PICTA and adopted at the same time, the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER)[15] also came into effect in 2003. It is an agreement between Australia and New Zealand on the one hand and the Pacific Islands on the other but is not a free trade agreement, certainly not within the meaning of GATT Article XXIV, and was explicitly designed as such.

Around the time it was being negotiated, the EU sought to conclude economic partnership agreements with Forum Island countries (FICs) under the Cotonou Agreement. This was seen by Australia and New Zealand as a threat to their interests and they sought protection from it.

Essentially PACER requires FICs to consult with Australia and New Zealand if they, individually or collectively, seek to conclude trade agreements with other countries,

[10] Article 22.1, Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement
[11] Article 22.2, Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement
[12] Article 22.3, Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement
[13] Article 4, Annex V, Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement
[14] Article 22.6, Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement
[15] Available at www.forumsec.org.fj

again individually or collectively. As the Forum Secretariat put it, "the principal benefit to Australia and New Zealand is the assurance it provides that they will not be disadvantaged in FIC markets as a result of any arrangements the FICs may conclude with other countries" (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat Trade and Investment Division, n.d: 4). For their part, the main benefits of PACER to the Islands are greater trade facilitation and financial and technical assistance. It is one thing for the Islands to move toward greater integration into the global economy in the hope that will bring added benefits and thus improve their capacity to provide public goods but quite another for that to compromise the interests of stronger countries.

Yet, as I show below, the Islands have given more still, even at the risk of compromising their sovereignty, and this against pleas for greater donor understanding of Island complexities and synchrony with Island priorities that have been not been heeded as much as the Islands would like. It is precisely for this reason that I described as straightforward the political-economic calculus set out at the beginning of this paper. I now explain why one public good, regional peace and security, lies at the heart of that calculus as well as the bargain it entails.

Give and Take: Regional Peace and Globalization

The fact is that Pacific Islands will forever remain extremely marginal players in the global economy. But that should not mean that stronger players should strive to wring from them every possible economic advantage. Indeed it is sensible for stronger players to make allowances and compromises that would better enable the Islands to provide public goods in general. More especially, this would be more conducive to peace and stability in the world's largest oceanic region that, moreover, the major powers have become increasingly concerned about in the face of the growing threat to international peace and security posed by terrorism. My argument is that because the Islands' very real and demonstrable commitment to regional peace and security has come at considerable cost, it is reasonable for them, at the very least, to expect the kind of reciprocation by donors outlined above.

The regional record on promoting regional peace and security predates the Forum. From the late 1960s independent island states consistently pressured for island decolonization and fought French nuclear testing in the region. In these struggles, the role of civil society, both at national and regional levels, was crucial. Among others, church, trade union, student and women's groups joined forces with political leaderships to form a region-wide movement for a nuclear free and independent Pacific. By the time the Forum was formed in 1971, the movement was well-established and subsequent Forum involvement in it led to the adoption in 1988 of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty.

The principal targets of the Treaty and the wider peace movement were external actors but when regional actors threatened regional peace and security they too become targets. The region's first military coup, in Fiji in May 1987, introduced a wholly new dimension to regional security and the growing political instability that followed later, especially in other Melanesian countries, underlined the seriousness of the new threat. Another, transnational crime, surfaced in the 1990s when various developments either confirmed or fuelled fears about the movement of illegal weapons as well as drug trafficking and manufacture. Following the September 11 attacks in the US, fears about money laundering and the possible use of the region for illegal, especially terrorist, activity were added to the list. It is not surprising therefore that, especially in Australia, the discourse on the Pacific has been increasingly dominated by concerns about instability; hence the preoccupation with 'weak states', 'failed states' and Melanesia as an 'arc of instability' (May, 2003).

Faced with these threats, the region took strong action. Responses at the national level, often supported by assistance from regional colleagues, were complemented by responses at the regional level. In one key respect the latter are especially important: they often require action at the national level that challenges national sensitivities and encroaches on national sovereignty. Under the regional reform agenda the Islands were compelled by donors to make changes. In cases like Vanuatu, Cook Islands and the Solomon Islands they were comprehensive and deep. But the reforms generally, although justifiable is many respects, required changes that the Islands, were their sovereignty more real than apparent, might have made differently; for example, in

terms of scope, pace and sequence. By and large, however, that was not the case and Papua New Guinea's refusal in the late 1990s to buckle under World Bank pressure to change its system of land tenure is very much the exception that proves the rule.

Significantly, more than in any other, it is in the area of regional peace and security that the Islands have shown greater general willingness to make changes, even at the risk of encroachments on their sovereignty.

That risk, it is true, attends international relations generally, particularly at the multilateral level, and therefore does not entitle the Pacific to special treatment. But that is not what I am suggesting. My argument stands on the proposition that what is ultimately at stake is regional peace and security and that, without it, external actors have more to lose than the Islands. Having established that case, I argue that if greater regional peace and security is to be achieved, the contributions and costs incurred by the Islands demand greater donor reciprocation than has been the case thus far.

Individually and collectively the Islands have responded in a generally accommodating way to predominantly donor-driven regional initiatives, especially those in line with the following milestone Declarations of the Forum: the 1992 Honiara Declaration on Law Enforcement; 1997 Aitutaki Declaration on Regional Security Co-operation; 2000 Biketawa Declaration; 2002 Nasonini Declaration on Regional Security; and 2003 Forum Declaration on Solomon Islands (Pacific Islands Forum, 1992; 1997; 2000; 2002; 2003).

The last of these welcomed the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). Initiated and funded largely by Australia, its central feature was the deployment in Solomon Islands of a regional force of over 2000 military and police personnel from Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Tonga in July 2003. The first such deployment, RAMSI raised the level of regional co-operation to a new level but more far-reaching in their consequences were the Biketawa and Nasonini Declarations.

The Biketawa Declaration is telling in three related ways. A response to regional instability following another coup in Fiji in May 2000 and one in the Solomon Islands

two months later, it spoke more generally to a whole series of deep tensions in the Islands, including in relation to land, indigenous rights, and the place of custom and tradition. In doing that, secondly, it issued a pointed and unmistakeable message about the need not only for good governance generally but for democratic governance in particular, and this despite the recognition of "the importance of respecting and protecting indigenous rights and cultural values, traditions and customs" (Pacific Islands Forum, 2000: Annex). Thirdly, the seven Principles of Good Governance set out in the Declaration, and through which the central message was delivered, drew heavily on the Eight Principles of Public Sector Accountability that earlier emerged out of the regional reform agenda.

Although only declaratory, the Biketawa document clearly and unequivocally conveyed the stronger donor preparedness to risk offending national sensitivities in pursuit of regional peace and security. That Forum Island members were party to the Declaration more than hints at their declining capacity to resist or acceptance of its value, at least on the part of some Island members. Equally, however, this can be seen in a more positive way – as evidence of Island willingness to do their bit for regional peace and security. The same can be said of their commitments under the Nasonini Declaration.

In it the Forum Island countries, together with Australia and New Zealand, underlined their "commitment to the importance of global efforts to combat terrorism and to implement internationally agreed anti-terrorism measures" as well "the importance…of introducing legislation and developing national strategies to combat serious crime including money laundering, drug trafficking, terrorism and terrorist financing, people smuggling, and people trafficking in accordance with international requirements in these areas". To these ends, they

- urged full implementation of relevant legislation under the Honiara Declaration by the end of 2003;
- directed the Forum Regional Security Committee to review regional implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1373 on "international cooperation to combat threats to international peace

and security caused by terrorist acts" as well as the OECD Financial Action Task Force Special Recommendations on money laundering;

- commended work being done to develop model legislation to address, among other things, terrorism and transnational organized crime, and urged its adoption, with appropriate adaptations, when finalized; and

- noted that a regional model law on weapons control had been developed and encouraged each other to adopt it "to the fullest extent possible taking account of the different domestic situations" (Pacific Islands Forum, 2002).

Again, although only declaratory, the Nasonini statement at the very least confirms a serious moral imperative that the Islands have taken upon themselves to abide by.

The vigorous and sustained way in which donors pursued these outcomes is evidence of the critical importance they attach to regional peace and security. That being so, there is a case for greater reciprocation on the part of donors, all the more so because of the Islands' limited resources, the additional burdens and costs willingly incurred by them, and the risk of encroachments on their sovereignty. In particular, there is a need for donor assistance to be based on a more informed appreciation of the complexities of the Island condition, especially of why and how it is that domestic dynamics, driven very largely by cultural and political factors (particularly around land and indigenous rights), do not sit easily with the far-reaching reforms donors demanded of them. This is not to suggest a total lack of donor sensitivity in the past but rather to stress the need for more sensitivity to and active support for marginalized voices in the Islands.

A major part of the problem is the dominant players in the Islands have been the state and elites. What is more, donors this knows, as their commendable efforts at stamping out corruption and increasing transparency and accountability show. But it is the flipside of that effort, the empowerment of the marginalized, which needs greater donor attention and active support. That, of course, risks charges of political interference and neo-colonialism but who makes those charges and why are questions that can legitimately be asked. Continuing popular discontent suggests not only that the charges are likely to be made by powerful and privileged groups but also that

weak and disadvantaged groups would welcome external assistance that increases their empowerment.

These are serious and challenging issues that donors must confront if they are to achieve the regional peace and security they desire, and without which the global economy cannot function smoothly. At the practical level, effective donor responses to these challenges would require changes too numerous to consider here and many of which are already well known – greater flexibility in terms of the timing and sequencing of reforms, more effective assistance for capacity building, and less insistence on their preferred model of development, to mention a few. For the purposes of this paper, however, one set of changes, which have to do with governance reform, is particularly important and needs brief consideration.

Engaging Civil Society

As mentioned above, civil society in the Pacific has made important contributions to the search for regional peace and security. A key point about those contributions, however, is that they were made outside of the formal machinery of regional co-operation. Indeed, it was their exclusion from the most important regional body that motivated civil society groups to establish the Parallel NGO Forum in 1995 in an attempt to influence Forum decisions. By and large the Forum ignored the NGO Forum but that did not stop the attempt by NGOs to be integrally involved in the Forum process. Tellingly, a similar move to so integrate the private sector came to fruition in 2002 with the adoption of the Regional Public-Private Sector Consultative Mechanism (RCM) (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2002c).

The Forum had long stressed the importance of the private sector, so the onset of the RCM is not surprising, nor is the fact that this institutionalized engagement with the private sector involves a telling departure from established Forum practice. Through the RCM, the private sector is accorded the unique privilege of being able to puts its views at a separate meeting of the Forum Secretariat's governing body, the Forum Officials Committee, to focus on private sector development alone. Advice from the Officials is put to Forum Ministerial Meetings, including the FEMM, from where

recommendations go to the Forum for consideration. That no other constituency is accorded this privilege testifies to the seriousness with which the Forum takes the private sector. The same cannot be said for the rest of civil society.

Also in 2002 the Forum Secretariat adopted the Framework for Engagement with Pacific Regional Non-State Actors (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2002d). This marked the beginning of institutionalized participation by civil society in regional governance but in a much more limited way than the RCM. Firstly, it is an arrangement for discussions between civil society groups and the Forum Secretariat, not the Forum Officials Committee. Secondly, civil society views may be funneled into Forum process but only through documents prepared by the Secretariat. Third, unlike the RCM where the private sector decides who may participate in Forum-related discussions, in the case of the Framework there are eligibility criteria for participation. These are determined by the Secretariat and they limit the number and range of NGO participants.

This welcome but limited involvement of civil society in regional governance is not surprising, given the fear of offending governments. But such fear is precisely what donors have had to contend with and they have done so with increasing confidence. They clearly have the capacity to effect greater civil society involvement in regional governance and the importance of civil society in achieving the regional peace and security on which their interests depend suggests the need to put that capacity to better effect. And do so they must because domestic political dynamics in the Islands militate against greater and more genuine engagement of civil society in governance at both national and regional levels, which is precisely a reason for continuing high levels of popular disaffection in the region.

Making Regional Peace & Security more possible

Adequate provision of public goods in general presupposes agreement on what is needed as well as order of priority, which in turn presupposes genuine consultation with all stakeholders. If, therefore, donors are really serious about good governance in the Islands, then they need to make every effort to ensure it. This is not to suggest a

carte blanche for them but rather that there is both a case and a need for a change in donor practice in relation to civil society in the Pacific. Admittedly, consultation with civil society is a key requirement of donor assistance but it is a relatively easy matter for recipient governments to show that they have so consulted. The issue, however, is not whether they have but how and with whom.

On these and other matters donors and the Islands need to do more. On better engagement of civil society in national and regional governance, donors can and need to be more forthright, indeed insistent. At the regional level at least, the Forum Secretariat's Framework for Engagement with Civil Society is a good starting point. That and the experience of the wider reform agenda suggest that from such a small beginning can come bigger and better things.

With increased and more effective involvement by civil society, the prospects for greater regional peace and security will be brighter.

REFERENCES

Huffer, E. and So'o, A., "Introduction", in Elise Huffer and Asofou So'o eds*.,
Governance in Samoa*, Canberra: Asia Pacific Press and Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies,
2000.

Roger Keesing, "Creating the Past: Custom and Identity in the Contemporary Pacific,
Contemporary Pacific, 1&2 (Spring and Fall 1989): 19-42.

Stephanie Lawson, *Tradition versus democracy in the South Pacific: Fiji, Tonga and
Western Samoa*, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Ron May (ed.), *'An Arc of Instability': Melanesia in the Early 2000s*, Canberra: State,
Society and Governance Project, Australian National University, and Christchurch:
Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, 2003.

Uentabo F. Neemia, *Cooperation and conflict: costs, benefits and national interests
in Pacific regional co-operation*, Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies,
University of the South Pacific, 1986.

Pacific Islands Forum, *Communique*, 1992; 1997; 2000; 2002; 2003.

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *Session 2 Paper: Public-Private Sector
Partnerships, Forum Economic Ministers Meeting, Port Vila, Vanuatu,* Suva, Fiji,
2000b. (Available at www.forumsec.org.fj/Home.htm)

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Forum Economic Action Plan, Suva, Fiji, 2002a.
(Available at www.forumsec.org. fj)

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *Stocktake of the Implementation of Forum
Economic Ministers Meeting Decisions*, Suva, Fiji, 2002b.
(Available at www.forumsec.org.fj/Home.htm)

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *Session 2 paper: Public-Private Sector Partnerships, Forum Economic Ministers Meeting*, Port Vila, Vanuatu, 2002c. (Available at www.forumsec.org.fj/Home.htm)

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, (2002d) *Framework for Engagement with Pacific Regional Non-State Actors*, Suva, Fiji, 2002d. (Available at www.forumsec.org.fj/Home.htm)

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat Trade and Investment Division, *PICTA and PACER: Frequently Asked Questions*, Suva, Fiji, no date. (Available at www.forumsec.org.fj)

Steve Thomas, "A Political Economy Approach to Examining South Pacific Regionalism: The Post-Cotonou Process in the South Pacific", paper presented at the Second New Zealand European Studies Conference, Auckland, 2003, unpublished.

William Sutherland, "Global Imperatives and economic reform in the Pacific Island states", *Development and Change*, 31, 2 (March 2000):459-480

World Bank (1993) Towards Higher Growth in the Pacific Island Economies: Lessons from the 1980s, Washington, D.C: The World Bank.