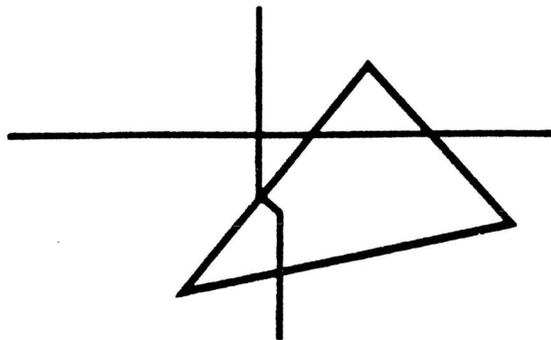


“Institutional Sources of Stress in Pacific Regionalism”



by Dr. Richard A. Herr

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Dr. Herr's paper was originally presented at a seminar at the University of Hawaii at Manoa in April, 1979. In October of that same year, a draft was circulated at the South Pacific Conference in Tahiti where it was the subject of considerable informal discussion. Publication delays prevented its appearance until now, and a few items are outdated. Nonetheless, Dr. Herr discusses issues of significance with regard to regional cooperation in the Pacific which are of continued interest.

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INSTITUTIONAL SOURCES OF STRESS IN PACIFIC REGIONALISM

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The belief that regional cooperation is imperative for the survival of the South Pacific has become so widely accepted as to virtually enjoy the status of a political axiom. While this verity is scarcely gainsaid within or without the South Pacific, the implementation of a regional approach has involved numerous difficult decisions particularly in recent years. At the heart of many of these problems has been the felt need to reconcile the national aspirations of the constituent states and a general but less concrete desire for regional cooperation. However, as decolonization has proceeded in the South Pacific the attachment to regionalism and the rhetoric which expresses this attachment have tended to develop faster than the capacity for regional cooperation. The resulting lacuna between expectation and reality has in turn created further problems for regional cooperation in the South Pacific. Nowhere are these stresses more evident than in relations between the South Pacific Commission (SPC) and the South Pacific Forum.

One of the key weaknesses in the contemporary rhetoric of South Pacific regionalism derives from its preoccupation with regionalism as a single monolinear progression. As each stage of development is passed a new stage of regionalism emerges unfettered by the previous limitations. This perspective on regionalism is rather naive, I believe, and would appear not to be based on either the theory or practice of regionalism. Thus whereas the present debate has tended to focus on the question, "what is the right type of regional organization for the region?"; I would prefer to recast the question in these terms, "what type of regional system will best serve the South Pacific?" The first perspective presupposes a choice between the SPC and the Forum while I would argue that such a choice is unnecessary if each body develops a mutually satisfactory reciprocal relationship. Further, I would suggest that the outline of such a reciprocal relationship is not only possible but indeed is already visible. It appears to me that the South Pacific and regional cooperation will be much improved if the systemic rather than organizational approach is adopted.

The Rationale for Regionalism

The academic literature is replete with explanations for regional association but not all of these are appropriate to the South Pacific. For example, one of the oldest reasons for regional cooperation is military security (despite the fact that

historically proximity has been the grounds more for enmity than amity). This justification has thus far not underpinned regionalism in the South Pacific. The ANZUS Agreement of 1951 was for many years assumed to confer some residue collective security on the region, of course, but it did not and still does not directly involve any South Pacific states other than Australia and New Zealand. Federation is another general rationale which has had little specific application to the South Pacific. There was a period between the two World Wars when some consideration was given to federating the British, Australian and New Zealand colonies and another briefly after 1945 when it was fashionable to propose the political union of Melanesia. Nevertheless these musings proved to be tangential to the subsequent thrust of South Pacific regionalism.

More germane are explanations based on economic and cultural influences. These two (augmented by administrative efficiency and historical ties) are the principal grounds upon which the present infrastructure of regional association has been built. For the European states which imposed the area's first experience of regional cooperation on the Islands, the more important of the two has always been economics. The metropolitan powers have tended to view the small, isolated and resource-poor countries of the South Pacific as economically suspect. To help create a more viable economic situation the Western states have, in word if not in practice, advocated the achieving of economies of scale through supra-national cooperation. On the whole, they have treated such cooperation as something of a logical necessity based on Western notions of economic viability.

The Island states have generally accepted the economic argument in principle although their perception of the need for regionalism takes a different tack. For the South Pacific leaders, the sense of commonality arising from cultural affinity figures much more prominently in their calculations of the value of regionalism than this question has in the minds of Western officials. Further, while Europeans have tended to see regional cooperation as an economic imperative the Island leadership is inclined to view it in more voluntaristic terms. They are agreed, in the main, that their economic development will be enhanced by regional cooperation but they are less convinced that such development depends on trans-national association.

Before pursuing in some detail the evolution of regionalism in the South Pacific, I would make a few further comments on the general justifications for regionalism since this theoretical framework does color my analysis of the current problem in the South Pacific. The functionalist school (or, as it has become known more latterly after years of revision, the neo-functionalist school) within the field of international relations seeks to explain the origin and prospects of regional institutions by relating the purposes for association to the intensity of the regional relationship.¹ A fundamental tenet of the functionalist persuasion holds that non-political organizations (i.e., those institutions which exist to serve limited "functional" needs such as trade, common social services, and development) are comparatively non-controversial and, by preceding political association, help to give rise to a climate in which political institutions will emerge successfully. This phenomenon is referred to as ramification or the "spill-over" effect; that is, non-political cooperation tends to ramify, or spill-over, into political cooperation. Thus over time the relatively low-level of agreement that is required to create a functional regional organization will unintentionally conduce to a higher level of agreement which makes more sophisticated structures of regional organization possible. The rich amalgam of specialist and political regional institutions in contemporary Europe is self-consciously functionalist in its inspiration and development. It should be noted that, although this approach suggests a progression, functionalism implies a diverse and wide range of regional contacts which are not monolinear.

Joseph Nye suggests a typology of regional integration which serves not only to define the characteristics of regionalism but also provides a rather simple ordinal scale for measuring the level of regional association. Nye's typology is based on variations in structural or organizational relationships among the participating governments. At the simplest level, that of "token integration," there is "an ephemeral expression of the supra-state sense of community without any significant restructuring of interests." A stage higher is the "security community in which regional institutions and symbols are sufficiently accepted to create a sense of illegitimacy of violent conflict among members." The third level, "limited functional cooperation," involves a rather greater degree of interaction based on "the sharing of costs of limited services, such as a regional airline, or monetary cooperation or the establishment of regional development banks." Economic

associations ranging from free trade areas through customs unions and common markets to economic unions represent the fourth level of regional integration while the fifth, and highest, stage is reached with "direct political unification."²

Regionalism in the South Pacific, I believe, has now achieved a level somewhere in the middle to upper end of Nye's stage three; that is, a fairly effective degree of limited functional cooperation. Before it lies the glittering prizes of the fourth tier's economic associations. While it is neither automatic or even necessary that the transition be made, a certain subliminal functionalist imperative within the region appears to be compelling the participants to make the attempt to push South Pacific regionalism one step further. Here is where the rhetoric, already in stage four, creates problems for the realities, still consolidating the gains of stage three. The sort of limited functional cooperation which the South Pacific now enjoys exists comfortably within the state system which has emerged with decolonization. Progress to stage four of Nye's typology involves a denial of at least some elements of nationalism and the creation of some supra-national institutions which imply weakened state authority. There must be a measure of doubt that countries so recently independent will wish to surrender their national prerogatives easily. Indeed, the experience of the regional airlines and shipping lines negotiations show how difficult such a surrender of state authority is for these countries even where there is general agreement that substantial regional gains would be forthcoming.

The Evolution of South Pacific Regionalism

Few of the institutions of South Pacific regionalism are entirely indigenous to the area. As one of the last regions to be swept by the "winds of change," the initiative for such matters, as for all else, was exercised in capitals far removed from the South Pacific. Complicating the issue was the division of the area among six metropolitan powers. Thus, the need for regional cooperation was first interpreted and expressed by the governing Europeans to satisfy essentially European perceptions and requirements which ranged from administrative efficiency to imperial security; from racism to humanitarianism.³ This colonial experience has had fundamental implications for contemporary South Pacific regionalism. It has helped to set both the limits and the terms of the subsequent debate.

It would be only a slight misrepresentation to say that the current state of regional association in the South Pacific derives from the decision by Australia and New Zealand in 1944 to establish a welfare commission for the area. The motives of the two Australasian governments in advancing their proposal were not totally selfless. The Australian foreign minister, Dr. H. V. Evatt, for example, harbored a firm desire to unite all the islands on Australia's northern and eastern flanks in some military alliance and the proposed welfare agency was one step in this direction.⁴ After three years of progress by fits and starts, a treaty (known as the Canberra Agreement) was signed by Australia, France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and the United States to "encourage and strengthen international cooperation in promoting the economic and social welfare and advancement of the peoples of the non-self-governing territories in the South Pacific region administered by them."⁵ The organization created by the Canberra Agreement, the South Pacific Commission, was to be a functional institution without any political powers which would acquit itself of its responsibilities by providing expert advice to the administering authorities.

The SPC established a number of essential precedents for South Pacific regionalism. Most importantly it defined the scope of the region. As originally set in the Canberra Agreement the boundaries of the region included all the islands westward of Pitcairn to West New Guinea and from Norfolk in the south to the Gilberts in the north. Only two changes have occurred since 1947; Guam and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands were added in 1951 and West New Guinea was deleted in 1962. Perhaps equally interesting were the exclusions from the area defined by the SPC—East Timor, Easter Island, and Hawaii. These territories (and perhaps one or two others not so seriously considered) were excluded from the intended ambit of the SPC for definite, if not always explicit, reasons. These decisions contributed as much to present views of the region's scope as did the positive inclusions. Today few question that the existing ambit of the SPC defines the South Pacific region even though, as will be seen below, this definition constitutes a major source of tension between the SPC and the Forum.

Another significant repercussion from the Canberra Agreement was the innovation of a regional council for South Pacific Islanders. The South Pacific Conference was only to meet triennially as an auxiliary, advisory body to the

Commission but it established the principle nonetheless that Islanders should meet periodically to discuss matters of mutual interest. It was this organ of the SPC which was to contribute so much to the development of a regional sentiment in the South Pacific. For the first time, an opportunity existed for South Pacific Islanders to gather together and, if not formally, at least informally discover a sense of commonality and discuss the implications of this affinity.

With the mounting pressures for decolonization within the various South Pacific dependencies from the late 1950s came a parallel demand to localize the SPC, the area's one inter-governmental association. The initial breakthrough was reached when Western Samoa was allowed to accede to the Canberra Agreement in 1965, three years after its achieved independence, but most subsequent reforms centered on the South Pacific Conference. By forcing the Commission to call annual meetings of the Conference, allowing an Islander to chair the Conference, and permitting the Conference to examine and comment directly on the work program, the Conference created for itself the means through which it might achieve its ultimate aspiration, the decolonization of the SPC. By 1970, the Conference felt the time had arrived to press for complete equality. An Islander, Afioga Afoafouvale Misimoa of Western Samoa, was then Secretary-General and the Conference had a major say in the work program even to the point of making voluntary contributions to help pay for the organization's limited schedule of projects.

The most irksome feature of the SPC for Islanders as it existed in 1970 was its proscription on all political debate. They wished to consider collectively the principal issues of the day and could see no reason why these aspirations should be frustrated by the metropolitan powers who found such questions as the French nuclear tests on Mururoa embarrassing. For their part, the European states did not appreciate why the eighteen member Conference should wish to delve into matters for which only four could take any direct political responsibility.⁶ A test of wills was joined at the Suva meeting of the Conference in September 1970 and the Conference lost; primarily due to the intransigence of France and the only slightly less adamant opposition of Great Britain and the United States.

As a direct result of the Islanders' failure in Suva, the South Pacific Forum was created the following year to give the region, or at least part of it, a political voice. A largely exploratory meeting of heads of government from the Cook Islands, Fiji, Nauru, Tonga and Western Samoa met with Australia and New Zealand in Wellington in August 1971. This was followed six months later with a session in Canberra and, by the third meeting in Suva in September 1972, the Forum had taken shape. In addition to annual meetings of heads of government (or their foreign ministers), there was to be a small permanent executive agency-cum-secretariat known as the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation (SPEC) to be headed by the then Tongan Treasurer, Mahe Topouniua.⁷ Over the years since its inception the Forum has pursued issues of the first magnitude of importance to the region. These include regional aviation and shipping, telecommunications, the law of the sea, fisheries development and control, and the French nuclear tests. The organization has also expanded its membership. The Gilberts (soon to be Kiribati), Niue, Papua New Guinea, the Solomons, and Tuvalu have now joined the original seven members.

Although compelled to resort to a separate organization to achieve their political aims, the Islanders' efforts to restructure the SPC were not abnegated. A major review in 1973 resulted in a memorandum of understanding which was signed in Rarotonga in September 1974 effecting an almost complete merger of the European-dominated Commission and the Islander Conference. It also greatly expanded the powers of the (new) Conference in control over the work program and budget. Another review in 1976 virtually completed the merger by eliminating the more significant vestiges of the old Commission. Neither review, however, bestowed the right to indulge in political debate.

The 1976 SPC review took place under some rather extraordinary circumstances for, although ostensibly only concerned with reform of the SPC, it was widely recognized that many Forum members had decided to have done with what they considered a charade and hoped this review would provide the vehicle to secure the demise of the SPC. It was not so much that the Forum members had completely abandoned what the SPC had once represented to them but that they had abandoned the old avenues of reform. Their strength and numbers convinced many in the Forum that they could achieve the type of regional organization they had wanted in 1970 by simply replacing the SPC with the Forum.

Problems of Regional Association in the South Pacific

Before undertaking a brief overview of some current issues facing the institutions of regionalism in the South Pacific, I should reiterate that, in general, I accept the functionalist interpretation of regional organization. Thus I am inclined to see more value in functional associations such as the SPC than would someone who prefers the more direct approach permitted only through political institutions. Clearly this view is in no sense antagonistic to politically competent regional agencies. The functionalist interpretation anticipates that non-political associations will give rise sooner or later to political organization. Indeed, I would argue that the existence of the South Pacific Forum should enhance significantly the value of functional associations such as the SPC if a proper balance between the two bodies can be achieved. What is at stake, therefore, is the premium one attaches to the "relics" of successful ramification.

The SPC itself stands as something of a monument to the functionalist approach. Over the past thirty years it has ramified in a number of directions. Among its direct spillover effects may be counted the South Pacific Games, the South Pacific Arts Festival, and the South Pacific Forum. Indirectly, the SPC has helped to generate the University of the South Pacific and the Pacific Islands Producers' Association (PIPA).⁸ This last named resulted, like the Forum, from frustrated efforts within the SPC which therefore finally had to seek redress in a separate organization. In 1974 PIPA was absorbed into SPEC as their membership and purposes had almost completely overlapped.

Fundamental to the SPC-Forum dilemma now confronting South Pacific regionalism is the issue of geographic scope versus functional comprehensiveness. The SPC can offer the former and the Forum can provide the latter but neither both. The SPC continues to be able to unite the entire South Pacific because it eschews politics, a situation which permits France, Great Britain, and the United States to accept the involvement of their dependencies in regional activities. The Forum, being comprised of independent and self-governing states, is vitally concerned with the great problems of the region and therefore must exercise its political powers to seek solutions in whatever direction these take. The matter appears stalemated since the metropolitan powers will not permit politics within

the SPC and the Forum states have so far refused to accept a less geographically complete definition of the South Pacific region.

That the dilemma exists at all can be attributed to a sort of prevailing historical determinism in the minds of many in the South Pacific. For a decade PIPA and the SPC coexisted without giving rise to any serious demarcation disputes. The Forum almost from its inception has been viewed by its members and most external observers as a successor body to the SPC. Long years of struggle to localize the SPC created a vision in the minds of many South Pacific politicians and public servants of what characteristics a "proper" regional organization should display. This image was manifested in the Forum from 1971. Thus, implicit rivalry has always been expected between the two. The establishment of SPEC only heightened expectations of institutional jealousy and in recent years charges of duplication and poaching have been duly laid by each although these charges have yet to be sustained in detail.

During the 1976 SPC review, considerable attention was necessarily focused on relations between the SPC and SPEC. Both to reduce the potential for duplication and to recognize the increasing range of activities being undertaken by SPEC, the review committee recommended that the SPC concentrate its efforts more towards "grass-roots" development.⁹ This view was adopted by the subsequent Conference meeting. A Forum review of regional aid arrangements in the same year proffered a less moderate solution to the demarcation dispute. The review's report, in effect, suggested that the SPC commit suicide and will its assets to SPEC.¹⁰ Tensions between the SPC and SPEC also occupied a substantial portion of the discussions at the 1977 meeting of the Conference. The three non-Forum metropolitan powers (France, Great Britain and the U.S.) were annoyed that two projects researched by the SPC were to be transferred to the Forum for implementation. Loss of the comprehensive environmental management program was mildly worrying but the release of the regional fisheries agency especially stung the American delegation which then called for a clear delineation between the functions of the SPC and SPEC.

In almost every regard the tension over demarcation has, however, been a spurious dispute. The original difference between the two bodies remains, as it must, the ultimate dividing line for responsibilities. The Forum acts with political

authority while the SPC does not. Regardless of whatever functional delineation might be devised to distinguish between the SPC and the Forum, the barrier can never be complete. Virtually any matter may become political. Whenever an issue becomes politicized, as did both the fisheries and conservation research of the SPC, then the Forum will fulfill its raison d'être and act to secure coordinate action by the regional governments. This method of delineation obviously confers the initiative on the Forum since, merely by expressing an interest in a matter, the member governments can pre-empt SPC action. The SPC is powerless to do more than protest. (Even here, however, the SPC is limited by the fact that Forum members can control the vote in the Conference since they have twelve of the twenty-three votes normally cast.)¹¹

While the Forum derives its particular strength from its political authority, it is not as free to act politically as may first appear. The Forum lacks a major advantage of the SPC—its geographic comprehensiveness. The SPC is the only inter-governmental association which spans the entire area now considered "the South Pacific." This territorial inclusiveness confers more than psychic prestige; it has practical significance. The restricted geographic scope of the Forum circumscribes its options uncomfortably at times and especially when the issue involved concerns a matter of importance to the whole of the South Pacific. This became particularly apparent in 1977 and 1978 during the negotiation on the then proposed regional fisheries agency. Rather than treat the issue solely at the Forum level, the Forum arranged a wider meeting to encompass the whole of the South Pacific. The result was a convocation virtually identical in composition to the South Pacific Conference. As became evident at the Niue Forum in 1978, the rate of expansion in the Forum's membership must decline and few aspirations can be held that a complete overlap in membership between the SPC and the Forum will occur at an early date. The concurrent offer by the Niue Forum of easier entry into SPC is unlikely to serve as an acceptable alternative to those territories excluded from Forum membership.

Not only is the demarcation dispute overstated, the logic which claims that the Forum must emerge as a successor to a declining SPC appears to me to be somewhat faulty. Underlying this argument, any misreading of the theory of

regionalism apart, is the view that the South Pacific cannot afford two regional organizations. The specific interpretation of "afford" is rarely made explicit although generally it is assumed that the term carries economic connotations. Economic implications are admittedly an important element of the regional calculus but other matters demand consideration as well. Political circumstances and the strengths and weaknesses of the organizations involved must also be taken into account.

In economic terms, the prima facie evidence suggests that the South Pacific would be poorer were the SPC to be forced out of existence to make way for the Forum. Approximately 95 percent of the SPC's budget (nearly \$4,000,000 Australian) originates from the five European members. Little expectation could be held that the three states excluded from the Forum—France, the United Kingdom, and the United States—would contribute at the same level to a regional body of which they were not members. Further, it must be doubted that Australia and New Zealand would, in effect, pay double subscriptions to the one organization if the Forum were to expunge the SPC. Additional sources of financial assistance could be lost as well since the SPC attracts aid to the region through joint projects which presently fall outside the Forum's interest. Thus the hypothesized economies of scale which might result through merging the SPC and the Forum could easily prove illusory in practice.

A second aspect of the cost/benefit calculus for a single regional organization raises politico-economic questions. While the SPC will continue to lose its former pride of place in South Pacific regionalism, as long as it exists the SPC will serve as a form of insurance against the complete loss of regional contacts. Political associations are subject to greater stresses than functional organizations and are therefore intrinsically less stable. The politicization of the SPC's sister organization, the Caribbean Commission, contributed significantly to the demise of that body in 1964 and, with the subsequent failure of the West Indies federation, left the Caribbean region with few outlets for regional cooperation. The same pattern was repeated in East Africa. Again, whatever economies may be achieved in concentrating responsibilities into a monopolistic regional structure these economies will entail the putting of all the South Pacific's regional eggs in the one basket. The potential cost of surrendering the insurance created by the existence of the SPC could well be much higher than those favoring its abolition may suppose.

Although not prepossessing when compared with the Forum, the SPC does have some strengths in its own right beyond merely its geographic inclusiveness which do contribute to the success of South Pacific regionalism. Firstly, being a non-political association, the SPC provides an arena in which new or experimental ideas in regional cooperation may be tested without the risk of serious political embarrassment. This could be seen as an important safeguard by the political leaders of the Forum for whom any kind of failure may bring adverse electoral consequences. Research and development always involve risks and costs—even in the area of regional cooperation. Secondly, the advantages of a non-political international gathering extend to states other than the participating countries. The Conference is open to observers in a way that a heads of government meeting like the Forum can never be.¹² At the 1977 and 1978 Conferences, for example, states such as Canada, Chile, and Japan were able to gain access to South Pacific opinion on the regional initiatives which concerned them (mainly fisheries) without having to take official note of these views. They purchased this benefit at a price, however, since the observers had to listen to complaints against foreign activities in the region; again without any ground being given for official annoyance. The presence of observer countries and international organizations confers a third advantage on the SPC. The Conference affords an opportunity for the dependent territories to engage in a variety of diplomatic contacts which would ordinarily be denied them by their dependency status. Finally, the SPC's less dramatic work program does attempt to resolve common but mundane problems within the region such as atoll sanitation and village nutrition which would not often attract great political interest.

It must be admitted that as a would-be successor to the SPC, the South Pacific Forum boasts some noteworthy advantages. The Forum has made an enormous contribution to regional cooperation simply by its willingness to tackle the awkward problems which were previously allowed to fester. In a region where only two countries (Fiji and PNG) are materially larger than the city of Hobart (population 160,000), the Forum has given the South Pacific a more substantial voice in world affairs. This enhanced diplomatic capacity has occasionally been employed by the Islands against Australia and New Zealand but more commonly has been bolstered by the international standing of the two Australasian powers to win concessions outside the region. Although in existence less than eight years, the

Forum has made remarkable progress in such areas of regional cooperation as communications, fisheries, shipping and trade relations. Nevertheless, the organization is not without its limitations.

As with any regional organization, national interests prevent a complete harmony of purpose within the Forum. Nationalism for many years frustrated all attempts by the Forum to establish the regional shipping line. A comprehensive regional civil aviation agreement still eludes the Forum although Fiji's Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, warned at the Forum's 1974 meeting that failure in this area would undermine the Forum as an instrument of regional cooperation. The costs of the regional university, the University of the South Pacific in Suva, are met in part by subscriptions from among the participating countries and here too cooperation sometimes breaks down as countries argue over the relative levels of their individual subscriptions. Such difficulties are certainly no worse than those experienced by similar organizations elsewhere but, particularly as in the case of the air consortium, one is reminded that the Forum's problems with nationalism cannot be discounted as inconsequential. Indeed, because the political competence of the Forum leads it to undertake the difficult problems of policy coordination across national boundaries, the implications of differences in the perception of national interest are likely to be, in general, much more serious for the Forum than the less political SPC.

Another source of tension derives from the restricted membership of the present Forum. The Forum has long had the image of being a Commonwealth club. When the Gilbert Islands were prematurely granted full membership in 1977 although not yet independent, the suggestion that special allowances would be made for Commonwealth territories was reinforced. This image was confirmed the following year at the Niue Forum where the question of expanded membership produced acrimonious debate. That the Forum enjoys an exclusively Commonwealth membership cannot be attributed solely to the preferences of current members, however. The primary reason has been the failure of the French and American authorities to create independent former colonies which would be technically eligible for membership. While some of the states at the Niue Forum declared themselves in favor of a more flexible entry procedure, the majority felt that overly lax requirements would allow France and the United States into the

Forum by proxy. One test of the Forum's attitude towards the non-Commonwealth Pacific will take place later this year when the organization considers observer status for Micronesia and the New Hebrides.

Concern over membership very early in the Forum's existence also highlighted another possible source of strain within the Forum. Fiji blocked an Australian supported application by PNG for membership at the February 1972 Forum meeting on the grounds that the territory was not yet independent. The recriminations which followed in the media of each country demonstrated clearly that Polynesian-Melanesian rivalries were not entirely dead. A face-saving device was arranged by the next Forum meeting when the status of invited observer was instituted. The problem re-emerged under the euphemistic rubric "sub-regionalism" at the 1978 Niue Forum when most of the divisive issues appeared to involve a Polynesian-Melanesian cleavage.¹³ Sub-regional or cultural factionalism may increase as an issue for the Forum if its membership continues to expand and diversify.

The expression of regional cooperation may be in the transnational coordination of governmental policy but its essence is the sentiment of commonality. This sense of commonality, however, is highly dependent upon a pool of shared community values. The larger and more diverse the membership of the Forum, the more diluted this pool will become. In consequence the fragile tissue of mutual trust needed to sustain regional cooperation in the South Pacific could be stretched to the breaking point. Certainly the divisive influences of nationalism and sub-regionalism will come more readily to the fore if the sentiment of commonality is seriously diminished for, while there is no immutable law of international relations which compels a regional organization to choose between breadth of membership and internal intimacy, controversy does appear to be a function of the diversity of opinion. It is primarily for this reason that some Forum states harbor concern lest the organization lose its Commonwealth character in the near future.

Perhaps the most intangible aspect of the Forum's future is also its most significant. This is the degree to which the organization is dependent on the vision, statesmanship, and personality of Ratu Mara. Since 1965 he has dominated all the

horizons of South Pacific regionalism. Much of the reform of the SPC was at his instigation; the Forum probably owes its existence to his energies. Of course, it would be grossly unfair to attribute the current state of regionalism in the South Pacific entirely to Ratu Mara but he does seem to have infected a whole generation of leadership throughout the region with his imagination and enthusiasm. Therefore the question must be posed, even if it cannot yet be answered, "Will South Pacific regionalism survive the second generation of leadership?" The early indicators are not altogether auspicious. Much of the heat of the Niue Forum was fired by an apparent generational conflict as newer leaders like Western Samoa's Taisi Tupuola Efi and the Cook's Tom Davis challenged the old guard over its control of the Forum's direction.

Conclusions

This rather sketchy treatment of some of the problems affecting organization in the South Pacific does not lend itself to many firm conclusions. Indeed, as I have only one basic observation to make, it may best be presented in the context of a brief restatement of this paper's themes. It may well be that there is a significant connection between the economic prospects of the South Pacific and the strength of its regional associations. Certainly this was the view taken thirty years previously by the six imperial powers when they established the SPC. As the SPC succeeded in promoting regional cooperation, it kindled a desire among the rapidly decolonizing local states for more. The refusal of some metropolitan countries to accept a political association forced the Islands to establish a separate regional institution, the Forum, to satisfy their aspirations for a higher level of cooperation and interaction. The circumstances surrounding the Forum's creation have tended to encourage a sense of rivalry and competition between the Forum and SPC which I believe is both spurious and unnecessary.

Based in part on the functionalist interpretation of regionalism, I do see considerable merit in flexibility and choice in regional-association. This is both a general theoretical position and a view based on the recent developments in the South Pacific. Hence my single conclusion: an early merger of the Forum and the SPC may well be of dubious advantage to South Pacific regionalism. The presumed economies of concentrating all responsibility into a single institution must be

discounted against the risks to each organization and thus to the sentiment of regionalism they represent. Regional cooperation requires not only that strengths be shared but weaknesses as well. If regional organizations are to contribute fully to regional cooperation neither can their capacities be overestimated nor their shortcomings minimized. The SPC has strengths which have not always been recognized but which, I believe, enhance the quality of regional cooperation in the South Pacific. The Forum's impact has been remarkable but its weaknesses, although of a different order to those of the SPC, can only be ignored with risk.

Given the current climate of opinion, the pressure to resolve the "problem" of two regional organizations in the South Pacific will be with its leaders for some time to come. Ultimately perhaps such pressure may produce an umbrella organization under which a variety of lesser regional associations will shelter and through which they will maintain a creative pattern of reciprocal relationships. The shape of this umbrella institution cannot yet be discerned but it would not surprise me if it had a general assembly which looked remarkably like a South Pacific Conference, an executive council something like a streamlined Forum, and a secretariat much like a combination of SPEC and the SPC's Secretariat. This scenario, however, appears to me to be one of middle future rather than the near future unless a drastic redefinition of the region is to occur.

For the more immediate future, the development of a regional system based on a harmonious relationship between the SPC and the Forum seems both feasible and desirable. Were both organizations to take full advantage of each other's strength and encourage the development of each other's potential instead of attempting to exploit the other's weaknesses, regionalism would be even more healthy than its present robust state. For example, creative use of the SPC's capacity for experimentation and risk-taking in unexplored areas of regional cooperation would relieve the Forum of the perils of research and development which could overload it politically. In return this more sensitive approach to the SPC would add coherence and relevance to the SPC's work program. Similarly, skillful usage of the Conference's array of observers could enlarge the impact of regional decisions without committing the Forum states to a single political posture. The stature of the Forum could, in return, lend diplomatic support to members of the SPC which lack credible alternative outlets.

The range and flexibility of options open through a systemic, as opposed to a single organization, approach argues strongly for this strategy in regional cooperation. This is all the more true when the economic and political costs of the strategy are not clear and indeed as in the South Pacific may well be less than the single organization alternative. It is instructive to observe that, even where regionalism is most highly developed—Western Europe, no single organization has emerged to orchestrate the entire scope of regional cooperation in this part of the world. The European Economic Community exists to serve one set of aspirations and NATO another. The South Pacific will probably never enjoy the enormous extent of regional association which characterizes contemporary Western Europe but it can secure the advantages of a valuable partnership between its two major inter-governmental associations. Rhetoric and jealousy should not stand in the way of effective use of the South Pacific's limited regional resources.

Endnotes

1. For a brief review of functionalist literature see: James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., Contending Theories of International Relations (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott Company, 1971), pp. 292-96.
2. Joseph S. Nye, "Central American Regional Integration," in Joseph S. Nye, ed., International Regionalism: Readings (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968), pp. 377-79.
3. For a study of South Pacific regionalism before 1944, see: R. A. Herr and Doug Munro, "island Confederation and George Westbrook," The A.N.U. Historical Journal, December 1972.
4. I have reviewed the motives of the various metropolitan governments in my "A Child of Its Era: Colonial Means and Ends," New Guinea, July 1974.
5. Canberra Agreement to Establish the South Pacific Commission, preamble.
6. The four independent island states at the 1970 Conference were: Fiji, Nauru, Tonga, and Western Samoa.
7. A useful summary of the organization and operation of SPEC is in John K. Thomson, "South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation," South Pacific Bulletin, First Quarter 1976, pp. 17-22.
8. M. Margaret Ball treats these organizations in her "Regionalism and the Pacific Commonwealth," Pacific Affairs, Summer 1973, pp. 232-53.
9. Report of the 1976 Review Committee (Noumea: South Pacific Commission 1976).
10. "More Effective Aid" (preliminary report) (Suva, South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation, 1976).
11. Twenty-five votes are available in the Conference (including the five of the metropolitan states) but Norfolk Island and Pitcairn do not normally attend. The present Island membership of the South Pacific Conference comprises: American Samoa, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Gilbert Islands (Kiribati), Guam, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Hebrides, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn, Solomon Islands, Tokelau Islands, Tonga, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (Micronesia), Tuvalu, Wallis and Futuna, and Western Samoa.
12. A more detailed treatment of the ramifications of the observer system is given in my "The Role of Observers in the South Pacific Conference," South Pacific Bulletin, First Quarter 1976, pp. 8-11.
13. Although the cultural dimension was clearly evident at Niue and indeed, this was the aspect which drew the most comment in the press, there was another influence at work in the Niue Forum. An overlooked but equally important element of the confrontation was the struggle over a redefinition of the core/periphery composition of South Pacific regionalism. For many years

Polynesia occupied the core and much of Melanesia was on the periphery. The emergence of Melanesia in recent years has tended to shift the core westward and countries such as the Cooks and Western Samoa have felt a need to resist a diminished role for themselves as a result. Fiji is of course the pivot for this issue since it has a foot in each camp, as it were.