

forums of elite power and influence (e.g. as exemplified in the 'second track' CSCAP grouping on Asia/Pacific security)

The problem again concerns what is left out, ignored and rendered silent in Australia's 'open regionalism' policy, which compliments its cooperative security counterpart in placing more specific emphasis on the convergence thesis and the homogenising role of a range of multilateral institutions committed to the goals of the liberalisation of global and regional markets (e.g. APEC) As indicated above it is simple enough to take issue with this convergence theme in the larger global context, particularly in regard to great masses of the world's population (in Africa, the former Soviet Empire and the vast hinterland of China, for example) for whom notions of cultural homogenisation and capitalist-based liberalism represent something other than everyday reality. But even in Australia's immediate region where (recent hiccups aside) celebrations of the 'Asia/Pacific century' are already underway there is an effectively silenced other side to this story that we must begin to take account of if optimism and celebration are not to turn to acrimony and long-term policy heartache.

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On this other side, as a number of NGOs have pointed out, are some of the major losers in the globalisation-cum-modernisation project (e.g. the poor agricultural masses of the region, the rural landless and wage labourers) and an everyday reality (e.g. of impoverished women, of forced migration and of a destroyed environment) with the potential to do substantial damage to Australia's future ambitions in the Asia/Pacific region.⁵⁹ In particular Australia's multilateral market-led foreign policy might, in this context, be effectively detaching our policy perspectives from the everyday realities of regional life in which latent anger might well be converted into serious unrest.

The implications of the agenda promoted by APEC, for example, are likely to be devastating for the poor of the region, particularly poor farmers. Here, the push for agricultural trade liberalisation, if successful, will have far-reaching effects for the millions of small-scale, subsistence farmers throughout Asia who in a 'free' market would be unable to compete with the large-scale, capital intensive and highly

⁵⁸On this theme and in regard to this section of the paper generally I am indebted to Rodd McGibbon, particularly in relation to the Indonesian language material. Some of the material in this section is drawn from J. George and R. McGibbon, "Dangerous Liaisons: Neo-Liberal Foreign Policy and Australia's Regional Engagement" in *The Australian Journal of Political Science* (Forthcoming)

⁵⁹ This point has been made by NGOs across the region. See for instance "APEC: Statement from the NGO Forum on APEC" *Ampo: Japan-Asia Quarterly* 1996. 26 (4):17; "Slow Down the APEC Process, say NGOs" in *Third World Resurgence*. 1995. 64:18-19; *Community Aid Abroad Report: APEC. Its Effect on the Poor* (Melbourne: Polliewatch, 1995)