

40. PACIFIC SECURITY COOPERATION

BACKGROUND

In recent years, there has been increasing discussion of the idea of establishing a regional institution for consultation and cooperation in the North Pacific. In contrast to some other regions of the world, and especially in contrast with the improved climate for security and cooperation in Europe, North Pacific countries rely almost entirely on bilateral interactions in their relationships with regional neighbours. This is in part due to the vast distances that separate countries, disparities in geographic size, economic development, cultures and political systems and the lack of an historical tradition of dealing with problems as a region.

Some institutions do exist in the Pacific region. In the South Pacific, the South Pacific Forum was established in 1971. Australia, New Zealand and thirteen island states are members of the Forum which holds annual, private meetings. One of its most significant accomplishments has been the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (SPNFZ) treaty which bans the stationing, testing and manufacture of nuclear weapons within the South Pacific. The Treaty entered into force in 1986 (see Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones).

Four institutions are devoted to Pacific economic cooperation: the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, the Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference (PECC), the Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC) and the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation. On the security front, Australia, New Zealand and the US form the ANZUS alliance which has been in place since 1951. Similar in nature to the NATO commitment, the three agree that an attack on one member will be considered an attack on all. However, even this limited alliance has been strained in recent years. Finally, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) includes Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. ASEAN provides a forum for discussion of a variety of issues of concern, ranging from economic to security to domestic issues. While it is neither a full-fledged security arrangement nor one for economic integration, ASEAN has helped build much better relations among its members, and some coordinated approaches to other countries.

Relationships in the North Pacific were greatly influenced by the Cold War. The new warmth in the relationship between the US and the Soviet Union gave impetus and optimism to ideas for creating a North Pacific forum. Most of the proposals for a new forum aim toward the development of arms control, with confidence-building measures as a beginning. Some proposals have used the Conference on Security and