

**South Pacific Forum:  
Survival under External Pressure**

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The South Pacific Forum (SPF), an organization comprised of 14 Pacific Island Countries plus Australia and New Zealand, has engaged in active regional cooperation for the last 29 years. Relatively high marks have been given to the SPF as a subregional organization of developing countries. Norman Palmer mentions the SPF as one of “the three most important comprehensive sub-regional organizations in Asia and the Pacific,” along with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SARRC) (Palmer, 1991:34). Similarly, William Tow considers the SPF a “relatively more successful” subregional security organization, together with ASEAN, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Organization of East Caribbean States (OECS) and the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (at present, the Southern African Development Community • SADC) (Tow, 1990:8). Both consider the SPF a consistently functioning regional organization in international society.

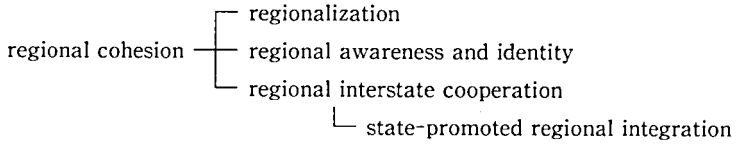
Unlike ASEAN, a renowned “success story” (Palmer, 1991:64 ), how the SPF has maintained and developed its regional cooperation to the present has not been sufficiently analyzed. This paper attempts to clarify how and why SPF regional cooperation has survived without halt or collapse from the organization’s inception to the late 1990s amid constantly changing international relations. Through such an investigation, the paper aims to analyze the characteristics and significance of SPF regional cooperation.

## REGIONAL COOPERATION CONCEPTS

First, the concept “regional cooperation” has generally been defined in the broad sense of regionalism. On regionalism, Andrew Hurrell presents a clear definition. According to Hurrell, regionalism is divided into five categories: 1) regionalization; 2) regional awareness and identity; 3) regional interstate cooperation; 4) state-promoted regional integration; as a subcategory of 3); and 5)

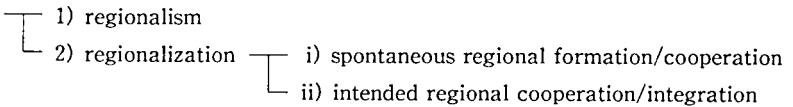
regional cohesion, as a combination of the above four categories (Hurrell, 1995: 39-45). This definition can be illustrated as Figure 1.

Figure 1



Based on Hurrell's definition, Ryuhei Hatsuse further elaborates the concept of regionalism as follows: 1) regionalism at the level of consciousness, such as ideology or slogan; 2) regionalization at the level of fact; i) spontaneous regional formation or regional cooperation; ii) intended regional cooperation or regional integration (Hatsuse, 1996:4; 1997:74-76). His definition is shown in Figure 2.

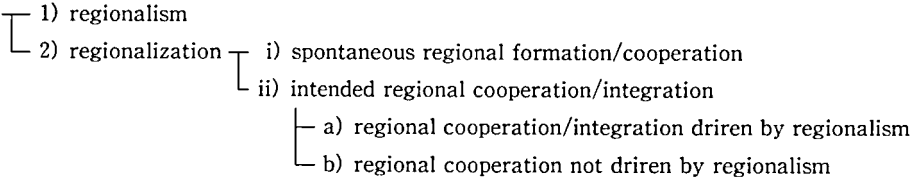
Figure 2



Fundamentally adopting Hatsuse's definition, one modification can be added. Although 1) regionalism at the level of consciousness, such as ideology or slogan, should be distinguished from 2) regionalization at the level of fact, it can be considered that regionalism at the level of consciousness is implemented with regionalization at the level of fact in an actual scenario. In that case, regionalization at the level of fact becomes ii) intended regional cooperation or regional integration. Therefore, intended regional cooperation or regional inte-

gration can be further divided into two subcategories: a) intended regional cooperation or regional integration which is conducted to implement regionalism at the level of consciousness, such as ideology or slogan; b) intended regional cooperation which is conducted according to the situation, not for ideology or slogan (regional integration is not an appropriate term in this case since it is often considered a goal in ideology or slogan). In sum, a) is regional cooperation or regional integration driven by regionalism, and b) is regional cooperation not driven by regionalism. Regional cooperation in a strict sense, in other words regional cooperation not driven by regionalism, is b). The concept can be illustrated as Figure 3.

Figure 3



Since the SPF is regarded as 2) ii) b), regional cooperation in a strict sense, this paper will use the categorization of regional cooperation to designate the organization’s regional activities.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES**

The SPF consists of 16 member states, namely 14 Pacific Island Countries (Samoa, the Cook Islands, Nauru, Tonga, Fiji, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Vanuatu, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia and Palau), as well as Australia and New Zealand. Among the

Pacific Island Countries, Samoa, Nauru, Tonga, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Kiribati and Vanuatu are independent states. The rest are freely associated states, the Cook Islands and Niue with New Zealand, and Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia and Palau with the United States. The freely associated states normally hold self-governing status and diplomatic rights except in the areas of defense and security, which are referred to a partner of the compact of free association. Although they can not be defined as independent states in a strict sense, they can be considered political entities with respect to regional matters<sup>1)</sup>.

Thus, SPF member states can be divided into two groups: the Pacific Island Countries on the one hand, and Australia and New Zealand on the other. Here, let us focus on the Pacific Island Countries, which took the initiative in forming SPF.

The Pacific Island Countries comprise the majority of SPF member states in terms of number. Except Papua New Guinea, all Pacific Island Countries have been generally considered “microstates.” Though there is a wide variety of definitions about what constitutes a “microstate,” there is broad consensus regarding population size as a major element (Boyce, 1977:233; Boyce and Herr, 1974:24; Dommen, 1985:13)<sup>2)</sup>. Then what population size can be adopted to define “microstates”? Unfortunately, there is no clear consensus on a population ceiling. However, it might be possible to set the population at less than one million as one criterion defining “microstates,” a figure that has been used in the United Nations and the British Commonwealth (Harden, 1985:9). Except Papua New Guinea, which has population of 4.4 million (based on 1996 figures), all Pacific Island Countries meet this criterion, with the smallest being Niue’s at 2,300 (based on 1994 data).

Nevertheless, it is not sufficient to define “microstates” only by population size, since the concept of “microstates” normally implies a smallness of land area, even though the population has primacy. We thus face the problem of what

land area can be adopted to define “microstates.” As one criterion for land area of “microstates,” this paper mentions 143,000 km<sup>2</sup>, a figure presented in the report of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (Dommen, 1985:10). Therefore, “microstates” can be defined as small states in terms of both population size and land area. Again, Papua New Guinea, which has a land area of 460,000 km<sup>2</sup>, is excluded from “microstates” in this sense.

The second characteristic of the Pacific Island Countries is insularity. Scattered in a vast Pacific Ocean, which occupies about one-third the earth's total area, they are isolated from other regions, except for Papua New Guinea, which shares a border with Indonesia. In addition, most of the Pacific Island Countries consist of relatively small islands. Furthermore, the majority of them are archipelago states composed of a plurality of islands.

Third, the Pacific Island Countries are developing countries. Their average GDP growth rate in 1995 was -4.3%. According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Pacific Island Countries that are ADB members facing economic crisis in many forms (South Pacific Forum Secretariat, 1996a:5-6)<sup>3</sup>. In particular, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Kiribati and Vanuatu are categorized as the Least-Developed Countries among the Pacific Island Countries.

In summary, it seems quite natural to describe the Pacific Island Countries in terms of small area, remoteness and insularity. Therefore, the Pacific Island Countries, as small-island developing nations, can be considered extremely vulnerable in various aspects.

First, they are at an economic disadvantage<sup>4</sup> compared with other developing countries with bigger population size and land area, since their market size and export scale are small. Their main industry often relies on primary industries whose products are vulnerable to natural disaster. When a natural disaster does occur, therefore, the damage might be critical to these small island countries. Furthermore, transport costs are high because of their location in a vast ocean, far from the world's major markets. While their land

area is generally small, some of them contain a large sea area since they are archipelago states, as mentioned above. For example, Kiribati has only 690 km<sup>2</sup> of land area, but it holds 3,550,000 km<sup>2</sup> of sea area, the largest sea area among all the Pacific Island Countries. It is assumed that with vast sea areas, there is an abundance of marine resources, such as fish, minerals, oil and gas. However, the Pacific Island Countries lack sufficient physical and human resources to develop and utilize the marine resources for mitigating their economic vulnerability.

Second, the Pacific Island Countries have little political influence and their voice is often ignored in the international arena. In addition, they lack resilience against political/military pressure and interference from major powers. Therefore, it is possible to label the Pacific Island Countries, which are economically, politically and militarily vulnerable, “weak states,” that is, under-developed countries which are “‘consumers’ of security and ‘price-takers’ in economics” and “share a common grievance against the Great Power systems” (Rothstein, 1977:42-43, 59).

There is a remarkable gap between the official status of the Pacific Island Countries as independent (and self-governing) states and their actual situation. For the Pacific Island Countries, making full use of the gap, in other words, appealing their rights and prestige as independent (and self-governing) states to the maximum, might be a vital way toward improving such an unfavorable situation. In this respect, regional cooperation is the most effective form to carry out such efforts for the Pacific Island Countries. Through such cooperation when several independent (and self-governing) states join together, their presence might be increased and their voice enhanced, despite their fundamental vulnerability. This is reflected in the fact that the SPF has allowed only independent (and self-governing) states as official members from its inception. Kamisese Mara, then prime minister of Fiji who played an important role in forming the SPF, precisely defined it as an “organization of the leaders of the states, who take responsibility for their own matters” (*New Zealand Foreign*

*Affairs Review* [hereafter, *NZFAR*], May 1974:27).

It seems a natural consequence that the Pacific Island Countries tend toward regional cooperation to survive in international relations. Through regional cooperation, they can obtain collective bargaining power vis-a-vis external powers, a situation not available to the individual countries. Furthermore, it creates leeway for repelling interference and influence from major powers and prevents the major powers from ignoring their presence. In addition, regional cooperation can help to reduce high costs imposed on individual countries through the sharing of institutions and services.

However, it is also true that the Pacific Island Countries might find it difficult to pursue such regional cooperation. It is easier, more beneficial and more effective for them to link with major powers bilaterally, rather than carrying out multilateral cooperation with countries in similar circumstances. Even if they launch regional cooperation, they will face a high risk that the cooperation will collapse because of discord among members that lack the capacity for concession and compromise, unlike larger countries.

Additionally, their geographical situation has created social and cultural diversity, and might prevent mutual understanding. The Pacific Island Countries can be broadly divided into three major cultural regions: Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia. In each cultural region, the islands hold their own distinctiveness. Because of such a geographical situation, the Pacific Island Countries can be considered an area where mutual transactions have been fundamentally infrequent. Even among islands where such communication has existed, it has led to conflicts and rivalries, not necessarily cooperation. In short, we must not think simply that the Pacific Island Countries are inevitably oriented to regional cooperation because of their characteristics. Such characteristics of the Pacific Island Countries might be reason for SPF regional cooperation, but they alone do not answer sufficiently how and why SPF regional cooperation has survived amid international relations. It is not unusual for regional cooperation to



stagnate, and eventually cease, with time, despite perhaps a colorful start. Regional cooperation especially among developing countries often ends up in such a situation. When we consider how and why SPF regional cooperation has survived, there should be another answer, beyond the explanation stemming from the characteristics of the Pacific Island Countries.

## REGIONAL COOPERATION ON NUCLEAR ISSUES: FORMATION AND CONSOLIDATION OF SPF<sup>5)</sup>

How and why has SPF regional cooperation survived in the ever-changing state of international relations? Let us first investigate the process of the formation of the SPF.

In the 1960s, about a decade prior to the 1971 formation of the SPF, there emerged a crisis in the South Pacific region: in 1963, the French government announced the construction of nuclear testing sites in French Polynesia, and in 1966, it started nuclear testing. Western Samoa (at present, Samoa) and the Cook Islands, two Pacific Island Countries which had already gained independence or self-governance by that time, made strong protests to the French government, only to have their protests completely ignored (*Pacific Islands Monthly* [hereafter, *PIM*], July 1963:7; *PIM*, November 1965:23; Stone, 1967:156-157).

At the same time, the Pacific Island Countries tried to make protests at the meetings of the regional organization. Prior to the formation of the SPF, the South Pacific Commission (SPC) (at present, Pacific Community) had been established in 1947 for economic and social development of Pacific islanders by the countries which possessed island territories in the region, namely, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, France, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands<sup>6)</sup>. Although the SPC had an auxiliary body composed of delegates of Pacific Island Countries called the South Pacific Conference, there existed a

tacit principle of excluding political discussion from the conference, based on the intention of the founding countries. Despite the principle, at the South Pacific Conference in 1965, a delegate of the Cook Islands called for a resolution asking France to reconsider its planned nuclear testing. The conference turned down his request, however, on the grounds that it was a political issue (*PIM*, August 1965:30). Other attempts were made by the delegates of Fiji and Papua New Guinea at the conference in 1970 (*Fiji Times*, 24 September 1970; *Fiji Times*, 25 September 1970). Again, the conference failed to pass a resolution condemning French nuclear testing.

These incidents increased the need of the Pacific Island Countries to create a separate forum outside the SPC, in which they could discuss political issues. In 1971, five Pacific Island Countries – Western Samoa, the Cook Islands, Nauru, Tonga and Fiji – held the first forum meeting in New Zealand’s capital, Wellington. They held the meeting in New Zealand, not on an island, because some island leaders suspected Fiji of attempting to take the reins of leadership in the South Pacific (*NZ FAR*, May 1974:27). Fiji, the largest country among what were then five Pacific Island Countries, joined the United Nations in 1970 as the first Pacific Island Country, and it expressed its wish to be a spokesman for other Pacific Island Countries which were not members of the UN (Boyce and Herr, 1974:31-32). Although the Pacific Island Countries decided to establish a forum, it did not mean that they were united with mutual trust and understanding.

In addition to the Pacific Island Countries, Australia and New Zealand also attended the forum meeting. They were invited by the Pacific Island Countries because the Pacific Island Countries expected both countries to provide funding for the forum, imbue the forum with greater diplomatic impact, and prevent the incorrect impression that the forum was anti-European (Mara, 1977:105; *NZ FAR*, May 1974:26). For Australia and New Zealand, joining the forum was beneficial, as they were “major powers” in the region but not in the

international arena. They could exercise greater diplomatic influence on the international scene collectively with the Pacific Island Countries.

The SPF was thus formed as a political forum. The first forum meeting discussed French nuclear testing and adopted a final communique expressing deep regret over the testing (*NZ FAR*, August 1971:7). This represented the SPF's first joint protest. Even though it is difficult to measure the weight of the SPF protest, it certainly contributed to pressure on the French government. After the forum meeting, France announced that it had called off the remaining nuclear tests planned for 1971. The French newspaper *Le Monde* stated that the decision marked the first time a nuclear power had given in to pressure from countries in the Pacific Ocean area (Johnson and Tupouniua, 1976:214). The SPF was formed to deal with external pressure represented by French nuclear testing.

Since that time, the SPF has developed regional cooperation against French nuclear testing. As well as adopting final communique protesting against French nuclear testing at its forum meetings, the SPF endorsed a resolution opposing all nuclear tests, which Australia, New Zealand and Fiji jointly drafted for the 1972 UN General Assembly (Fiji Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1972:86-87). The organization also supported three countries in their 1973 attempt to present the French nuclear testing issue to the International Court of Justice (*NZ FAR*, April 1973:16-17). These activities impressed on the international community the presence of the SPF as a regional organization. They also created an important foundation for regional cooperation centered on the SPF, which started without a founding agreement, permanent secretariat, or even mutual trust among its members. After establishing regional cooperation against French nuclear testing, the SPF set up the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation (SPEC) as its official secretariat in 1975<sup>7)</sup> and started intra-regional cooperation, such as regional shipping services. The SPF member countries themselves also acknowledged the significance of SPF regional cooperation through the activ-

ities against French nuclear testing, and it became natural for newly independent island countries to join the SPF soon after independence.

SPF regional cooperation faced a different kind of nuclear issue in the 1980s. In 1980, the Japanese government announced that it would dump low-level nuclear waste, produced at Japanese domestic nuclear reactors, in the high seas in the Pacific Ocean near Japanese waters. The Japanese plan was met by strong opposition from SPF countries. The SPF meeting in the same year adopted a resolution condemning nuclear waste dumping in the Pacific Ocean (*Fiji Sun*, 16 July 1980).

Although Japan was not specifically named in the SPF resolution, the Japanese government was concerned about the SPF protest. It sent an official mission to several SPF countries to convince them of the safety of the plan. However, the SPF countries demanded that the mission cancel its plan, and the mission therefore failed to achieve its goal (*PIM*, September 1980:9; *PIM*, October 1980:5; *PIM*, November 1980:35-36). The SPF meeting in the next year adopted a resolution naming Japan specifically and urged it to reconsider its plan of dumping nuclear waste (*NZ FAR*, July-September 1981:61).

Eventually, the Japanese government decided to abandon the plan. When Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone visited Fiji during an official tour in 1985, he gave his assurances that Japan had decided not to dump or store nuclear waste in the Pacific Ocean (*Fiji Times*, 16 January 1985). The decision was made partly because Japan wanted to launch new policies toward the South Pacific, such as the "Kuranari Doctrine," which aimed at a more active Japanese commitment to the region. It was apparent, however, that SPF's strong opposition put considerable pressure on Japan to change its attitude.

Further propelled by the activities against the Japanese plan of nuclear waste dumping in the Pacific Ocean, SPF regional cooperation moved ahead. At the SPF meeting in 1983, a proposal for the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone was tabled by Australia.

In the Australian proposal, nuclear testing was prohibited in the zone, but the passage and transit of nuclear-powered and -armed vessels and aircraft were not. Since Australia was a party to the ANZUS Treaty, a security agreement among Australia, New Zealand and the US signed in 1951, it tried not to jeopardize the treaty by referring to rights regarding whether to allow nuclear-powered and -armed vessels and aircraft into the ports and airfields of each member country. Since the views of other SPF member countries on this point were split, it was determined at the meeting to take more time to consider the Australian proposal (*NZFFAR*, July-September 1983:39-40; *Islands Business*, October 1983:17).

It was at the SPF meeting in 1985 that the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, which allowed member countries to decide whether to accept nuclear-powered and armed vessels and aircraft into ports and airfields, was adopted. Among the SPF member countries, Vanuatu and Tonga did not sign the treaty, with the former criticizing it as incomprehensive and partial, and the latter concerned about interference from the Soviet Union, which was expected to sign the protocol of the treaty (*Vanuatu Weekly*, 17 August 1985; *Matangi Tonga*, May-June 1987:36)<sup>9</sup>.

Although other member countries agreed not to include the issue of port calls of nuclear-powered and -armed vessels and aircraft into the treaty, it did not mean that they simply swallowed the Australian proposal. In fact, it was difficult for the SPF member countries to include this issue into the treaty because their stance was so divergent. For example, New Zealand banned nuclear ship visits to its ports, while Tuvalu signed the Friendship Treaty with the US, stating that the two governments would consult about any American requests to use its territory for military purposes in times of crisis. It also should be pointed out that the other member countries made a modification to the original Australian proposal. In the original proposal, the issue of nuclear waste dumping was briefly mentioned in the preamble because Australia was con-

cerned that potential nuclear dumping states, such as the US and France, would not sign the protocol if the issue was explicitly included in the treaty itself (Laka, 1985a:6). The Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Nauru presented an amendment to include the ban of nuclear waste dumping into the treaty, and it was adopted with the support of other member countries (Laka, 1985a:6; Laka, 1985b:12-13; Laka 1985c:4). The South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty thus marked itself as the first nuclear free zone treaty banning nuclear waste dumping into the ocean<sup>9</sup>.

SPF regional cooperation was formed and consolidated to deal with external pressure, namely nuclear issues, that were present through the 1970s and the 1980s. During this period, there emerged consensus among the SPF member countries that SPF regional cooperation was something to maintain despite different views, as shown in the signing of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty. This helped SPF regional cooperation continue, even though its intra-regional cooperation was not smooth, especially in the 1970s. The international reputation of the SPF as a regional organization playing a role in nuclear issues also hindered member countries from becoming fragmented.

## REGIONAL COOPERATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUES: MULTI-CHANNELIZATION OF SPF

It was in the early 1990s that SPF regional cooperation was confronted by a second external pressure, namely climate change issues generated by the phenomenon of global warming. It has been said that global warming would cause the sea level to rise, seriously affecting the Pacific Island Countries, which mostly consist of small low-lying atolls. Since climate change issues include complicated interests of various countries, the SPF has used multiple channels concurrently to make its voice heard in the international arena.

Like regional cooperation on nuclear issues, the SPF has been a funda-

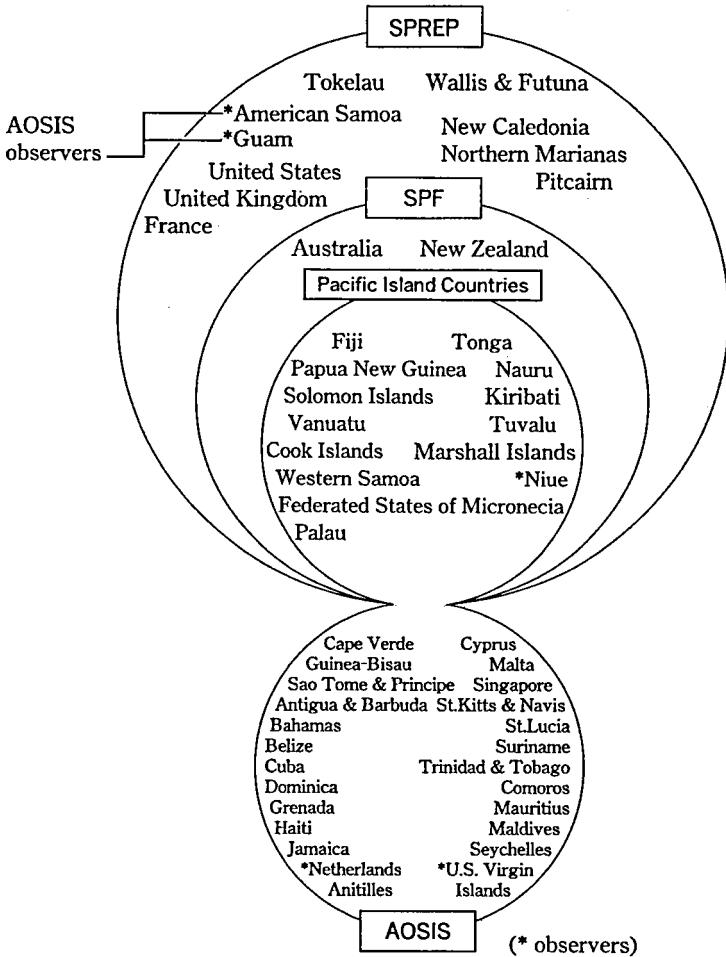
mental channel for SPF member countries to convey their collective voice to the outside world. However, unlike the previous cases, the SPF was not a sole channel. Besides adopting resolutions at its meetings and representing member nations at international conferences, the SPF played a significant role as a coordinating body to a larger regional organization and an inter-regional organization.

The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) was a regional agency specializing in environmental issues and established in 1980. The SPREP was composed of SPF member countries, non-independent island territories and three extra-regional countries which held island territories in the region, namely the United Kingdom, France and the US (See, Figure 4). In terms of area covered, the SPREP was a larger regional organization than SPF. However, it was short of effectiveness and autonomy because it was jointly run by the SPC, the SPEC, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

The SPF tried to transform SPREP into a genuinely effective body and utilize it as a vehicle to send a voice to the negotiating process of the international regime on climate change. Forming the core group within the SPREP, the SPF succeeded in its attempt in 1991, and the SPREP became an autonomous body with an independent budget and staff. After the SPREP gained autonomy, the SPF coordinated the voice of member countries on climate issues at meetings, tried to make that voice reflected within the SPREP, and further used the SPREP as a channel to the international regime on climate change.

The SPF has also acted as a coordinating body to an inter-regional organization. The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), formed in 1990, was that organization. The AOSIS comprised 43 small island states (39 members and 4 observers) in the Pacific, the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean, the Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the South China Sea, which were concerned about damage to their islands caused by climate change (see Figure 4). Although the AOSIS

Figure 4



affiliation took place on a nation basis, the AOSIS has utilized existing regional organizations as coordinating bodies. In that sense, the AOSIS was an inter-regional organization which has established a network of regional organizations of small island countries. The SPF sent a representative to the AOSIS coordinating committee, along with representatives from SPREP, the Caribbean Community Secretariat and an institution in the Indian Ocean. The SPF has



used the AOSIS as another channel to convey its voice to the international regime on climate change.

The international regime on climate change was formed at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, where the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) was adopted. What the SPF insisted through three channels, namely the SPF, the SPREP and the AOSIS, was partly incorporated in the Convention. For example, reductions of industrially generated greenhouse gas emissions were mentioned in the Convention despite opposition from the US, the biggest emitter of carbon dioxide. However, the signatories were not bound to the article since the Convention itself just aimed at setting up a framework for common principles on climate change. The SPF was not fully satisfied with the result and it adopted a final communique at a Forum meeting which was held soon after the UNCED, urging the early commencement of negotiations of the protocol to implement and elaborate the Convention (South Pacific Forum Secretariat, 1992).

On the other hand, the SPF's request for funding and transfer of technology to the small island countries for tackling climate change was referred to in the Convention, and based on this, the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States was held by the UN in Barbados in 1994. Again, the SPF used multiple channels in the conference to pursue its interests. The conference adopted the Programme of Action and the Barbados Declaration, stating that the international community should provide financial and technological resources to the small island developing countries which would be seriously affected by climate change (Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, 1994a; 1994b). This encouraged the SPF to accelerate regional cooperation on climate change.

The next target for the SPF was adoption of the protocol. The Conference of the Parties (COP) of the FCCC held four meetings by the end of 1998 and the protocol was adopted at the third meeting in Kyoto in 1997. Based on the

initiative of the Pacific Island Countries, the AOSIS presented its own proposal, called AOSIS Draft Protocol, requesting developed countries to reduce 20% of carbon dioxide emissions based on 1990 levels by 2005 (The Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 1995; *Pacific Report*, 24 April). However, the Kyoto Protocol stated, for the five years from 2008 to 2012, an 8% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions for the EU, 7% for the US, and 6% for Japan. Along with the AOSIS, the SPF felt that the reduction targets in the Kyoto Protocol were inappropriate (The Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 1997). To further enhance the international regime on climate change, it is expected that the SPF will continue its commitment to the regime through multiple channels such as the SPREP and the AOSIS.

To such climate change issues, which worked as external pressure, the SPF responded with a new style of regional cooperation using multiple channels to send a voice to the international regime. Generally, a sharp difference exists between developed countries and developing countries over these issues. While the latter insists that the former must take primary responsibility for climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and providing funds and technology to them, the former thinks that the latter also has a duty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Not only between North and South, but also within the North and the South there emerged a remarkable difference. In the North, EU countries and Scandinavian countries have supported the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, while the US, Canada and Japan have been reluctant to agree to reductions. In the South, contrary to the SPF, the oil-producing countries have fundamentally taken a negative attitude toward the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, as they are concerned about damage to their economies stemming from a decline in oil consumption. It was therefore more effective for the SPF to use multiple channels with respect to climate change issues containing such complicated interests of various countries, rather than

uttering a voice through only one channel in the international arena.

Regional cooperation through multiple channels also helped the SPF sustain regional cooperation despite cleavage of interest among its members. Until the adoption of the FCCC, Australia and New Zealand had kept pace with the Pacific Island Countries as SPF member countries. However, they went along with the US, Canada and Japan, countries reluctant to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as the negotiations of the protocol began. It was obviously difficult for them to support the reduction especially because Australia was a major exporter of coal. Instead of persisting in unanimity at the SPF, the Pacific Island Countries used multiple channels, such as the SPREP and the AOSIS, to pursue their interests. Regional cooperation through multiple channels provided a bypass for the Pacific Island Countries to send their voice to the international regime, even if the two regional powers, Australia and New Zealand, were taking a different approach. This prevented both sides from developing dissatisfaction with the SPF, which kept the SPF itself intact.

## REGIONAL COOPERATION IN GLOBAL ECONOMIC LIBERALIZATION: SUB-REGIONALIZATION OF SPF

Almost at the same time as the SPF conducted regional cooperation to deal with climate change issues, it faced another external pressure, namely economic liberalization on a global scale.

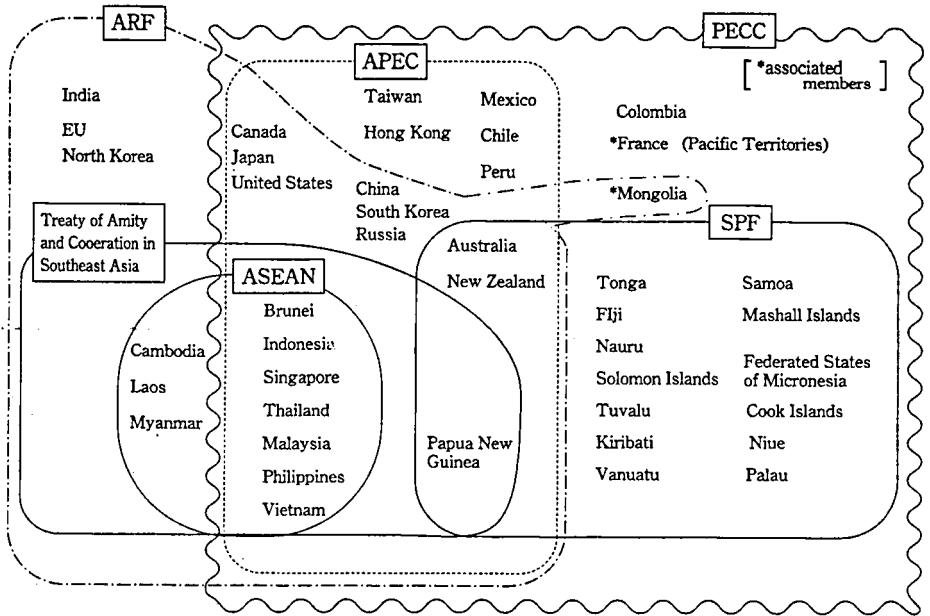
The Pacific Island Countries in general relied for their economic survival at one time on aid from extra-regional donors and special trade treatment such as trade preferences and price-stabilization schemes. In the Cold War era, the countries had a certain strategic value, although they were continuously under the “ANZUS Umbrella,” a security regime established by Australia, New Zealand and the US in 1951. They therefore received relatively large amounts of aid, mainly from Western countries. But their strategic value declined remark-

ably with the end of the Cold War, and accordingly, the amount of aid received from donors also dropped. In addition, “aid fatigue” of the donors caused a reduction in amount of aid. The Pacific Island Countries thus realized the uncertainty of a future based on aid from donors.

Furthermore, economic liberalization on a global scale threatened the existence of special trade treatment, on which the Pacific Island Countries have also come to rely. The Pacific Island Countries, as members of ACP (Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific) countries, have enjoyed such special trade treatment offered by the EC (at present, the EU) under the Lome Convention. Under the convention, they have been allowed to export such commodities as sugar, coffee, and tin fish to the EC market with preferences. The Lome Convention has also provided the Stabilization of Export Earnings System to compensate the ACP countries for fluctuations in market prices of the commodities. It was expected that such special trade treatment would not remain intact due to increasing economic liberalization. The Pacific Island Countries therefore had to be prepared for new economic trends and find a way to survive economically.

Commitment to Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) was one solution the Pacific Island Countries adopted to face global economic liberalization. The Pacific Island Countries believed that by making a commitment to APEC they could learn from the market-led policies of the Asian economies which had led to dramatic economic growth, and diversify the international market by strengthening institutional and market linkages with Asia (South Pacific Forum Secretariat, 1995a:4). The SPF meeting in 1991 mentioned APEC for the first time and came to an agreement that SPF member countries would enhance their relationship with APEC (South Pacific Forum Secretariat, 1991). However, among the SPF member countries, only Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea maintained official membership status in APEC (See, Figure 5). The SPF had to make contact with APEC only through the observer status which it had held in APEC since the 1989 inaugural meeting, and through those

Figure 5



SPF member countries which held full membership in APEC. Therefore, the first step for the SPF was to obtain recognition from APEC.

In 1995, the SPF indicated its position that it would adopt and implement APEC's principles of trade and investment liberalization. The SPF meeting of that year adopted a final communique and a Plan of Action for "Securing Development Beyond 2000," stating that the SPF would adopt and implement the investment principles agreed to by APEC members, and work towards implementation of trade reform measures required by GATT/WTO (South Pacific Forum Secretariat, 1995b). Furthermore, the SPF circulated at the APEC Ministerial Meeting in Osaka in the same year a statement called "South Pacific Forum Countries & APEC: An Important Relationship" to convey its attempts at liberalizing the economies of the Pacific Island Countries through reductions in both tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade and investment (South

Pacific Forum Secretariat, 1995a:6). The SPF also started in 1996 an economic ministers' meeting and referred consideration to it regarding the next appropriate steps to maintain momentum in tariff reforms (South Pacific Forum Secretariat, 1996b).

The 1997 SPF economic ministers' meeting adopted an Action Plan which required SPF member countries to provide a policy environment to encourage private-sector development (South Pacific Forum Secretariat, 1997a). Based on the plan, the SPF meeting in the same year reaffirmed the commitment to free and open trade among the Pacific Island Countries through tariff reform and ensuring investment transparency (South Pacific Forum Secretariat, 1997b). The SPF eventually agreed, at its meeting in 1999, to establish the South Pacific Free Trade Area (South Pacific Forum Secretariat, 1999). Such efforts by the SPF for trade and investment liberalization have the aim of gaining recognition from APEC and establishing a close relationship with that organization, hopefully as one of its subregions, in order to survive economic liberalization on a global scale.

Nevertheless, it seems that trade and investment liberalization is not necessarily the sole goal for the SPF in its relationship with APEC. While the SPF has been trying to follow APEC's principles of trade and investment liberalization, it also expects economic and technical cooperation from APEC. Economic and technical cooperation constitutes one of the three pillars of APEC, but it has occupied less interest from APEC than trade and investment liberalization. It was not until the APEC Ministerial Meeting in Osaka in 1995 that this area started substantial progress. The meeting adopted the Osaka Action Agenda and "Partners for Progress" mechanism to promote economic and technical cooperation within APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, 1995a; 1995b). However, it has been observed that the development of economic and technical cooperation in APEC has stagnated in recent years because of the economic crisis experienced by Asian countries starting in 1997. Hence, it is not

certain that SPF can obtain expected economic and technical cooperation from APEC even through a close relationship.

The other problem for the SPF in relationship with APEC is membership. The SPF has acted as a representative for Pacific Island Countries, that are not members of APEC, in commitment to APEC. However, some countries, such as Fiji and the Solomon Islands, have shown an interest in obtaining full membership in APEC on their own terms (*Fiji Times*, 22 November 1993; *Pacific Report*, 22 May 1995). Since the APEC decided in 1997 to introduce a new ten-year moratorium on the admittance of further members, the issue is dormant in the SPF at the moment. Even if some Pacific Island Countries apply to APEC for full membership after the moratorium on new membership ends, it might be difficult for them to obtain because of their small economic size. The most feasible alternative for the Pacific Island Countries would be joining APEC as a collective body represented by the SPF. In that case, the SPF would be officially incorporated into APEC as a subregion.

Although there are several problems for the SPF in its relationship with APEC, it seems that the SPF continues to seek a close relationship with APEC in an attempt to survive economic liberalization. If so, it is inevitable that the SPF will define itself as a subregion in the Asia-Pacific region. The SPF has therefore responded to economic liberalization with sub-regionalization.

While sub-regionalization might present the danger of the SPF being swallowed in the macro Asia-Pacific region, it might also bring new possibilities to the SPF. For example, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) (See, Figure 5), a security forum in the Asia-Pacific region, which was established at the initiative of ASEAN in 1994, has supported the nuclear-weapon free zones as a means to strengthen international non-proliferation regimes (the ASEAN Regional Forum, 1995, 1996, 1997). From its relationship with the ARF, for example, the SPF might receive impetus for establishing cooperation with other nuclear-weapon free zones in the Asia-Pacific region, such as the Southeast Asia

Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty, which was signed at an ASEAN meeting. Likewise, the SPF might find benefits for their interest in climate-change issues in the regional frameworks of the Asia-Pacific, such as the APEC Environment Ministers' Meeting and the Environment Congress for Asia and the Pacific (Eco-Asia). Although the Asia-Pacific region has not fully recovered from economic crisis, there is no other macro region into which the SPF can be incorporated as a subregion to survive economic liberalization.

## CONCLUSION

Let us go back to the question presented at the beginning of this paper. How and why has SPF regional cooperation survived up to the present amid changing international relations?

It should be stressed first that the SPF has responded to external pressure with a flexible stance. Instead of strongly adhering to ideals in regional cooperation, which is usually presented as a form of ideology or slogan at the start of regional cooperation, the SPF has responded to external pressure by setting, and later transforming, its style of regional cooperation according to the issues. This is a key element for survival and constant development of SPF regional cooperation, which has avoided the pitfalls that regional cooperation of developing countries often face. Flexible response to external pressure has helped SPF regional cooperation to adjust itself smoothly to changing international relations.

Another important point is that the SPF has dealt with global issues in a regional context. In fact, the issues bringing external pressure to bear on SPF regional cooperation, namely nuclear issues, climate change issues and economic liberalization, were all global issues. However, the SPF has perceived them as regional problems with acute influence on its own region. This attitude prevented the SPF from handling issues beyond its capacity, ending with bitter failure



and losing confidence and credibility as a regional organization. Although it might be observed that the SPF has also tackled global issues, it has no ambitions to play the role of global actor. This has also contributed to the survival of SPF regional cooperation in international relations.

It is possible to argue that SPF regional cooperation has responded to external pressure in a narrow regional perspective. Nevertheless, it surely liberates us from stereotypes of regional cooperation and enables us to realize that there is a rich variety and diversity in regional cooperation which has been ongoing relatively successfully around the world. SPF regional cooperation clearly illustrates that each regional cooperation has its own style of survival.

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## FOOTNOTES

- 1) One definition divides Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia and Palau as independent countries from the Cook Islands and Niue as non-independent countries, since the latter have not joined the UN (Kobayashi, 1994: 107, 125). However, this paper does not make such a distinction among them, since the Cook Islands, as well as Niue, have become party to international treaties, such as the UN Law of the Sea.
- 2) On the microstates, see (Harden, 1985), (Dommen and Hein, 1985), (Connell, 1988) and (Duursma, 1996).
- 3) Niue and Palau are not members of ADB.
- 4) Exceptional among small island developing countries, Nauru has phosphate to sustain its economy. However, that resource is expected to become depleted in the near future.
- 5) See (Ógashiwá, 1991) for the details on SPF regional cooperation on nuclear issues.
- 6) The Netherlands withdrew from SPC in 1962 and the UK withdrew in 1995.
- 7) SPEC was restructured as the Forum Secretariat in 1988.
- 8) Vanuatu signed the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty in 1995 and Tonga signed in

1996. See (Ogashiwa, 1994) on the nuclear policy of Vanuatu at that time.
- 9) Prior to the signing of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, The Antarctica Treaty was signed in 1959, the Latin America Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty was signed in 1967 and the Seabed Treaty was signed in 1971.

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