

The Case for a Pacific Islands Community

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Abstract

A new Framework for Pacific Regionalism has recently been set up to hasten the process of regional integration in the Pacific. Australia's Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, has called for a summit to discuss 'regional architecture' in the Pacific. This offers a great opportunity to put together a farsighted blueprint for regional governance in our little corner of the world. Following the example set in Europe, we review the case for deepening integration in the Pacific to form a Pacific Islands Community, as the next step beyond the Pacific Islands Forum. New institutions of governance should include a Council of Ministers with qualified majority voting, a Pacific Islands Assembly, and a Pacific Court. On the security side, we discuss ideas for a Pacific Islands Maritime Patrol, and a Pacific Islands Regiment.

Introduction

A "Pacific Plan" for the future development of the Pacific region was drafted a decade ago (Pacific Plan 2007), but implementation of the Plan was stymied by the military coup and interregnum in Fiji, the headquarters of the Pacific Islands Forum. In 2014 the Pacific leaders replaced the Plan by a '*Framework for Pacific Regionalism*', setting up a process by which proposals for regional integration could be reviewed and implemented. At the same time, a measure of democracy has been restored in Fiji, and elections have been held for a new Fijian Parliament, so the time has clearly come to consider further steps in regional integration in the Pacific

In Australia, the Foreign Minister Julie Bishop stated in December 2014 that she wants Sydney to host a new summit for Pacific leaders in 2015 (Wroe 2014). Ms Bishop said that several Pacific leaders had signalled support for a summit that could establish a new "regional architecture". It was time for Pacific leaders to chart their own course, she said, adding that a Sydney summit early in 2015 could set the regional architecture in place for that to happen. It would be likely to streamline the handful of existing groups, such as the Pacific Islands Forum, which often overlap or compete with one another.

"I'm proposing – and Prime Minister Abbott has agreed – that we should host a Pacific leaders' summit in Sydney in the first quarter of next year," she said. "I really think it's time the Pacific leaders determine what they want for the 21st century and I'm hoping that Australia will be able to host that."

These developments invite renewed discussion of what that “regional architecture” might look like.. Here we make the case for the formation of a *Pacific Islands Community*, moving beyond the present Pacific Islands Forum.

Background

There has been a worldwide trend towards regional integration in recent decades, following the example set by Europe. After World War II, the Europeans determined to put an end to the long series of wars between France and Germany, and recognized that integration was the way to do it, as outlined in the Schuman Declaration (Schuman Declaration 1950). The European architecture has evolved by successive stages since then, through the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Economic Community, and finally the European Union. In the Schuman Declaration, the ultimate goal of a European federation was announced, but that has still not been achieved. Indeed, strong resistance has been aroused against any further encroachments on national sovereignty in Europe. More recently, the global financial crisis has caused great financial stress in southern Europe, and raised the possibility that Greece may actually be forced to exit the Eurozone.

Despite these vicissitudes, the primary objectives of the pro-Europeans have already been achieved. Any future war between France and Germany has become inconceivable, and indeed Europe generally has become the most peaceful region on earth, according to the Global Peace Index (Global Peace Index). Furthermore, the economic integration brought about by the EEC produced an economic boom in Europe, and induced many new members to join, so that the number of member nations has expanded from the original six to the current 28.

Following this example, regional integration has been proceeding apace in other regions of the globe. The African Union embraces all the nations of Africa except Morocco. South America has drawn up ambitious plans for a Union of South American Republics (UNASUR), although those plans seem to be on hold for the moment. Many other regional organizations have also sprung up.

From an Australian perspective, this immediately raises the question, where does Australia fit in? Kevin Rudd proposed that an Asia Pacific community could integrate the whole Pacific region (Rudd 2008), but that initiative seems to have fallen flat. A more obvious idea is to take care of our own backyard, and look for further integration with our smaller island neighbours in the Pacific. There are a number of very good reasons to push this process, as we shall outline below.

In fact, integration in the Pacific has been proceeding by fits and starts ever since the former British colonies in the region attained their independence. It is obvious that the smaller island states cannot provide all the facilities of modern living for themselves, but must rely on co-operation with their neighbours if they

are to have any hope of moving beyond a subsistence lifestyle. The South Pacific Forum was established in 1971 to foster co-operation between them, in succession to the old South Pacific Commission of colonial days, and in 1999 its name was changed to the Pacific Islands Forum to reflect a wider geographic reach.

The heads of government of the Pacific Islands Forum currently hold an annual meeting to discuss matters of common interest in the region. There are sixteen members, consisting of Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Western Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands, Cook Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Palau, and Niue (Pacific Islands Forum). There is enormous variation in size and resources between them, ranging from Australia with 24 million inhabitants to tiny Niue with 1600.

The main focus of the Forum hitherto has been on trade and economic issues, such as regional air and shipping services, and the fisheries in the surrounding seas. The day-to-day activities are carried out by the Forum Secretariat (PIF Secretariat) based in Suva, Fiji, with around 70 staff members. The Secretary-General currently is Dame Meg Taylor from Papua New Guinea. The current annual budget is around A\$30 million, of which Australia and New Zealand contribute about 60%. The main aims of the Secretariat are to provide economic and political policy advice to the members of the Forum.

A number of crises have occurred in the region over recent years, including uprisings on Bougainville, Fiji and the Solomon Islands. The Regional Assistance Mission Solomon Islands (RAMSI) arrived in Honiara in 2003 to help restore order, with the consent of both the Solomon Islands parliament and the Pacific Islands Forum. It included personnel from many of the island states, giving RAMSI a truly Pacific face as representing the Forum as a whole.

Recognizing the important issues of security and governance facing the region, the Forum leaders in 2003 commissioned a review of the Forum and its operations by an Eminent Persons' Group, led by ex-Prime Minister Sir Julius Chan of New Guinea (Eminent Persons' Group review 2004). This review emphasized the concept of the 'Pacific Way':

"Leaders believe the Pacific can, should and will be a region of peace, harmony, security and economic prosperity, so that all its people can lead free and worthwhile lives.

We treasure the diversity of the Pacific and seek a future in which its cultures and traditions are valued, honoured and developed.

We seek a Pacific region that is respected for the quality of its governance, the sustainable management of its resources, the full observance of democratic values, and its defence and promotion of human rights."

The review called for a new *Pacific Plan* for the future development of the Forum. It asked the leaders “to consider regional integration that runs deeper than that established already under regional trade arrangements. We suggest that it would be timely to consider options for future economic and political integration – possibly to develop a model that is unique for the Pacific”. Among other suggestions for functional cooperation, the report suggested the possibility of regional law enforcement aimed at trans-national crime, and the introduction of a regional panel of judges. It noted that security must fall within the ambit of the Plan, and that there are already a number of agreements – notably the Honiara, Biketawa and Aitutaki Declarations – providing for regional cooperation on security and law enforcement issues. It also noted, however, that there is currently no mechanism by which these declarations can be given teeth. In view of previous occurrences of governmental breakdown, insurrection and other emergencies in the region, there is a need for more effective crisis response machinery, together with conflict prevention and conflict resolution mechanisms.

Without spelling anything out, the Eminent Persons’ Group thus prefigured many of the roles that the Forum could play as “village council” for the region.

In 2004, the Forum leaders considered the Eminent Persons’ Group review, and issued the Auckland Declaration containing a number of decisions to reform the Forum and its Secretariat. They authorized the development of a Pacific Plan to create stronger and deeper links within the region, and to identify the sectors where the region could gain most from sharing resources of governance and aligning policies (Auckland Declaration 2004).

The key goals of the Forum were identified as *economic growth, sustainable development, good governance, and security*. The resulting Pacific Plan was endorsed by Forum Leaders at the PIF meeting in Port Moresby in 2005, as a blueprint for future development of the group.

Implementation of the Plan was largely stymied by the military coup in Fiji in 2006, led by Commodore Frank Bainimarama. Fiji was suspended from membership in the Forum in 2009, and this suspension was not lifted until after a measure of democracy was restored, and a Fijian general election was held in September 2014.

In 2013 a Review of the Pacific Plan was commissioned, led by Sir Mekere Morauta, former Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea. The Review expressed disappointment with the pace of regional integration under the Plan. Its central conclusion was that “what is needed to progress regionalism is not a revised list of priorities, but an overhaul of the processes, institutions, and governance of the Plan.” (Pacific Plan Review 2013) In particular, the Review suggested that the Pacific Plan Action Committee (PPAC), which is charged with oversight of the implementation of the Plan and is mainly staffed by bureaucrats, had largely failed to drive progress in regional integration. It should be replaced by a smaller Board for Pacific Regionalism including representatives of civil society and the private sector.

Following the Review, the Forum leaders decided in May 2014 to replace the Pacific Plan by a *Framework for Pacific Regionalism*, which amounts to a

process for setting priorities in order to further regional integration. Proposals from interested parties are to be sent through the Secretariat to a Specialist Subcommittee of the Forum Officials Committee. The committee will vet proposals, and send a selected subset on to the Forum leaders for consideration.

Suggestions for Change

a) Governance

The 2013 Review advocates a “new framework for Pacific regionalism”, and imagines a possible future path for the region leading all the way to a Pacific Union in imitation of the European Union, or even a Pacific Federation. These developments will only occur decades into the future, if they occur at all. But the immediate next step is very obvious, namely the formation of a *Pacific Islands Community*, as an extension of the present Forum.

The changes to the regional architecture necessary to establish such a community would not be large. If we look at the European Economic Community, for example, the main structural elements which have persisted into the present European Union were:

- A supreme European Council of leaders of the member states, which meets periodically to formulate overall policy for the community. Decisions by the Council are generally reached by consensus ;
- A Council of Ministers, consisting of the ministers from each member state in a particular area (e.g. agriculture), to discuss detailed policy in that area as needed. A mechanism of “qualified majority voting” has been developed in Europe, to be used if necessary in reaching decisions by the Council of Ministers;
- The European Commission, consisting of one nominee from each of the member states, which forms the executive ‘cabinet’ of the Community;
- A representative Assembly consisting of nominated parliamentarians from the member states, which later became the European Parliament;
- The European Court, to settle disputes between the member states over the terms of the founding treaties, which became the basis for an eventual European legal system.

Following this example, the basic elements of a Pacific Islands Community are easily foreseen, and several are already in place:

- The Pacific Islands Forum already plays the role of a supreme Council;
- A *Council of Ministers* should be formally instituted, consisting of the ministers from each member state in a particular area (e.g. fisheries), to meet as needed to discuss detailed policy in that area. A mechanism of “qualified majority voting” should again be used in reaching decisions by the Council of Ministers, if necessary. This would avoid dominance of the Council by any particular member state, or group of states, and also avoid possible deadlocks due to a veto by a single member. A possible scheme of this sort is discussed in the Appendix;

- The PIF Secretariat already fills the role of executive to the foreshadowed community. Given the very much smaller size of the PIF compared to the EU, there seems no need for further complication here;
- The Pacific Plan already proposes a *Forum Parliamentary Assembly* as an enlargement of the present Forum Presiding Officers Conference (FPOC) to meet once a year. This could provide the nucleus of an eventual Pacific Parliament;
- The Pacific Plan already proposes setting up a panel of judges to adjudge cases involving regional treaties, which could become the nucleus of an eventual Pacific legal system.

These changes should not involve any great additional expense. Some further comments follow.

One of the principal economic resources of the smaller island states consists of the fisheries in their surrounding 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zones. They do not have the resources to patrol and manage these fisheries on their own, and in fact one of the principal regional activities at present is the Pacific Patrol Boat program to perform these tasks. It would be useful for the Minister in charge of fisheries in each member state to meet with his colleagues once a year to review and manage the program. The Ministers in other areas might also want to meet from time to time.

To facilitate decisions at such a Council of Ministers, and avoid any deadlock at this level due to a veto by one member state, a sensible voting scheme should be available if necessary at these meetings, as instituted by the Europeans. The scheme should naturally give greatest weight to the vote of the larger states, but it should also ensure that the smaller states have some 'voting power' over the decisions of the Council, and that no one state (Australia) or group of states dominates. The theoretical ideal scheme is discussed briefly in the Appendix, along with an alternative which gives greater weight to the smaller island states. This would allay the suspicions of the smaller states that a regional community would be dominated by Australia and New Zealand.

If a Forum Parliamentary Assembly is instituted, it would be natural to hold it at the same time as the leaders Forum, and in fact the two groups should probably hold a joint meeting during that time. In that way the Assembly members could be informed about the Forum decisions, and at the same time they could provide political input and advice to their leaders. At present, the Forum Presiding Officers Conference consists of the presiding officers of each member parliament. One model for the Assembly might also include an assembly of representatives from each major political party in each of the member states, to provide a range of views to the leaders. This would provide a natural basis for an eventual democratically elected Parliament. A discussion of the longer-term aim of a Pacific Parliament was given more than thirty years ago by Mike Moore, a former Prime Minister of New Zealand (Moore 1982).

A Pacific Court could be set up to hear cases involving Treaties between the member states on the basis of international law, and might eventually form the nucleus of a Pacific legal system. Given that the cases brought before the Court would very probably be few and far between, a reserve panel of judges could be appointed at fairly minimal cost. As one example of a possible responsibility, the Court might be given the task of assessing penalties for illegal fishing by foreign vessels encroaching on the Exclusive Economic Zones of the PIF member states.

A number of suggestions along these lines have already appeared. The Eminent Persons' Group (Eminent Persons Group 2003) called for consideration of "options for future economic and political integration", and said that "new thinking on the relationship between sovereign states may be required". They also suggested that a regional panel of judges be established. Prime Minister Tuilaepa Aiono Sialela Malielegaoi of Samoa, who was the chairman of the Forum at the time, gave an address (Malielegaoi 2005), in which he foreshadowed "a new phase of regional integration – a Pacific union of as yet unknown dimensions", and mentioned the EU as an example of what can be done. He suggested the formation of a regional pool of jurists and public prosecutors; "and perhaps the establishment of a regional constitutional court to deal with critical legal issues arising from major extra-constitutional crises in or between Forum countries". In the area of legislative governance, he proposed that the annual meetings of the Forum Presiding Officers Conference (FPOC) evolve into a platform for a regional Parliamentary Assembly, to promote the principles of legislative democracy, representative government and good governance.. He also noted that member countries will need to "agree to give up a little bit of our sovereignty not only for the common good but for our needs as a government and as a nation". In this way, many aspects of an eventual community have already been anticipated. In a special report to the Australian Security Policy Institute, a distinguished task force concluded that "the best way forward in Australia's engagement with its Pacific neighbours lies in a regional integration of Australia and the Pacific Island states conceived in the widest possible sense" (ASPI 2008).

Several of these proposals were incorporated into the Pacific Plan (Pacific Plan 2007). In the medium term, identified aims were to develop appropriate models for land ownership and tenure; and to "*enlarge the annual Forum Presiding Officers' Conference (FPOC) into a Forum Parliamentary Assembly to deepen regional co-operation between Pacific legislatures*".

In the longer term, the Plan looked for "harmonization of court structures in the region, and *development of a regional judicial mechanism or process to deal with important legal issues arising out of major extra-constitutional crises in or between Forum countries*". It includes provisions for a register of judges and public prosecutors willing to serve in different countries. It does not yet explicitly recognize, however, that the Forum will itself need the power to make laws and

regulations on common regional matters. If Pacific-wide economic integration is to be implemented, for instance, then the regional body will need to be given power to regulate inter-island economic affairs. This begins to impinge on national sovereignty, as recognized by the Samoan Prime Minister, and will need ratification by further treaties between the member states.

The Pacific Plan lists a large number of other priorities, most of which we are not competent to discuss. The strengthened institutions of governance outlined above would help to give renewed impetus, however, to the implementation of the Plan in other areas, such as trade and economic integration.

b) Security

Finally, some remarks on security issues may be in order. Immediate priorities listed here in the Plan include

- a regional strategy for maritime and aviation security;
- national implementation of the Biketawa, Nasonini and Honiara declarations;
- regional training and networks for national police forces;
- better intelligence services and strengthened relationships between regional specialist organizations.

No long-term objectives have been agreed here, and the Plan looks a little thin in this area. This is a sensitive topic which goes to core issues of national sovereignty. But there is an obvious need for some mechanisms of regional common security, namely:

- A *Pacific Islands Maritime Patrol* to combat illegal fishing, piracy, drug smuggling and similar problems in the region. Such a force would probably need to involve both seaborne and airborne elements, and to make use of resources such as satellite data, and the Jindalee over-the-horizon radar installation in Australia.
- A land-based security force, perhaps a *Pacific Islands Regiment*, to carry out peacekeeping duties both within and outside the region, and if necessary to intervene in “extra-constitutional crises” in the region. Interventions by such a force would carry much greater legitimacy than a similar intervention by (say) Australian or New Zealand forces, which are always subject to charges of paternalism or neo-colonialism. It could also provide a significant source of employment for some of the smaller islands.

The principle should be that the Pacific islands take collective responsibility for maintaining peace and security in their own region. Their responsibilities would include

- Monitoring and patrolling the exclusive economic zones of the PIF members, and preventing illegal fishing
- Monitoring and preventing illegal logging activities in the PIF member states

- Contributing to international peacekeeping missions undertaken by the UN
- Maintaining peace and security within the region, including Intervention to restore peace and order in one of the Island nations, if authorized to do so by the Forum assembly itself.

The first responsibility could be undertaken by a *Pacific Islands Maritime Patrol*. The means exist already in the shape of the Pacific Patrol Boat Program (McCann 2013). Using patrol boats, aircraft and retired frigates from the Australian navy, and satellite reconnaissance data supplied by Australia, the PIF already maintains a fairly sophisticated surveillance of the fishing zones from headquarters located in Honiara. Fishing is a major economic resource of the island nations, and the industry needs effective protection against illegal fishing by foreign vessels. The operations of the Pacific Patrol Boat Program should be placed under the control of the PIF, if this is not already the case.

This is a common theme in the literature. Indeed, the Australian Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee in 2010 called for “[*elevating*] the Pacific Patrol Boat Program into a regional initiative, supported by the Pacific Islands Forum and other donors” (Senate Committee 2010), and the Australian government promised to carry out an assessment of this idea. The Committee also called for a Regional Maritime Coordination Centre, which has come into being with the Honiara facility. A strategy paper by Herr and Bergin of the Australian Security Policy Institute (Herr and Bergin 2011) discussed the regional arrangements in considerable detail. The authors called for a “Regional Maritime Coordination Centre”, and noted that “*the success of Australia’s increased investment in combating illegal unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in northern Australian waters should now allow us to move some assets to help combat IUU fishing in the Pacific. The work would be a complementary component in support of the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency Regional Monitoring Control and Surveillance strategy.*”

Satellite and aerial reconnaissance could also be used to detect illegal logging activities in the PIF member states. Again, this is a very serious problem, affecting a major industry in the Melanesian states. There were claims in 2008 that the forests of the Solomon Islands would be exhausted in five to seven years, at the then current rate of illegal logging [Skehan 2008], and a joint report from the University of Papua New Guinea and the Australian National University has estimated that the PNG forests would be exhausted by 2021 at the current rate (Perry 2008). Corruption at the political level also contributes to the problem: Sir Michael Somare, former Prime Minister of PNG, reportedly admitted to having financial links to logging companies (Roberts 2007).

Satellite reconnaissance data could easily be analysed to reveal the extent of logging activity in the Melanesian forests, and a Forum agency could compile the data, and compare it with estimates of what a sustainable logging regime would

allow. It would then be up to the individual Forum members to act to protect their own resources.

The onshore security responsibilities could be undertaken by a *Pacific Islands Regiment*, again using equipment, training and facilities largely supplied by Australia and New Zealand. Such a regiment could undertake peacekeeping missions for the UN, earning income and providing employment for some of the island people. It would also be capable of spearheading any intervention to restore law and order in case of a breakdown of order in one of the island states, at the behest of the PIF council. It would thus act as guardian of their own peace and security, and would carry authority and legitimacy as embodying the collective response of all the PIF members.

In fact a Royal Pacific Islands Regiment already exists, set up in Papua New Guinea during World War II to help fight the Japanese, and incorporated into the PNG Defence Force after independence in 1971. It has already taken part in missions to Vanuatu, Bougainville and the RAMSI mission in Solomon Islands. This regiment could perhaps be recommissioned as part of a security force for the whole Pacific Islands Forum; or else a new force might need to be raised. This would require further consideration by the experts.

Conclusions

Maintaining and deepening the regional integration between the members of the Pacific Islands Forum brings obvious benefits, and can do much to promote peace and prosperity in the region. The smaller island states simply cannot provide all the benefits of modern life for themselves, and must rely on help and co-operation from the larger states to provide higher education, technical skills, industrial goods and employment for their people. Trade, investment and transport are best co-ordinated at the regional level, as also is the supervision and conservation of natural resources such as the fish stocks in the ocean and the tropical forests on land. Regional organizations can help maintain stable governance in fragile member states, as exemplified in the RAMSI mission, and can help counter any undue influence from outside, foreign states. Much has already been achieved in these areas, but much more remains to be done in the future.

Australia and New Zealand have generally adopted a sensible and bipartisan approach to the development of the Pacific region. The two governments between them provide the lion's share of the funding for regional organizations, and they are generally in favour of greater integration, as exemplified by the Australian joint Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade in 2003 (Senate Committee 2003), the Labor Party policy discussion paper '*Towards a Pacific Community*' (Sercombe 2005), or the recent statements of Foreign Minister Bishop (Wroe 2014). But their attitude is that it must be for the

Pacific Islands themselves to determine the costs and benefits of the Pacific Plan, and they are taking something of a back seat in its development.

Australia and New Zealand (to a lesser extent) have played an active role as 'deputy sheriff' for the region on several occasions, such as the military interventions in East Timor and the Solomon Islands. These actions were successful and well justified, being sanctioned by the United Nations and the Forum, respectively. There is always a danger, though, that such actions will be seen as paternalism and 'gunboat diplomacy', and arouse resentment among the smaller island states. Far better would be a collective response to such emergencies, carried out by regional security forces.

The obvious next stage in the integration process is the upgrading of the Pacific Islands Forum into a Pacific Islands Community, following the European template. This would not actually require huge changes in the regional architecture, or involve huge additional expenditure. Most of the elements have already been suggested in the Pacific Plan.

The new institutions we have discussed include a Pacific Court, to adjudicate on cases involving regional treaties, and a Pacific Parliamentary Assembly, a successor to the present Forum Presiding Officers Conference, to provide political input and impetus to regional decision-making. These bodies would also provide prototypes for an eventual Pacific legal system and Pacific Parliament. The formal institution of a Council of Ministers, with a qualified majority voting system on the European pattern, is also recommended.

We have also proposed strengthened regional security systems, including a Pacific Islands Maritime Patrol, to regulate a sustainable fishing industry in the region, and a Pacific Islands Regiment, to restore order in case of a breakdown in one of the island states, and also to carry out peacekeeping duties and provide some employment for the island people.

The Pacific Plan discusses many further initiatives to do with trade, economic and social development in the region, which we have not discussed here. In any case, the Forum's members are already firmly launched on a path towards greater integration. If wisely managed, this course will indeed lead to a Pacific region "of peace, harmony, security and economic prosperity, so that all its people can lead free and worthwhile lives."

Appendix. Qualified majority voting schemes

The European Union has pioneered the use of qualified majority voting in the Council of Ministers. If it is based purely on population, the ideal scheme is known as the Penrose scheme, after the mathematician Lionel Penrose, or alternatively as the 'Jagiellonian compromise' (Penrose 1946). It gives each member country a vote proportional to the square root of its population. Without going into details, this provides the ideal balance between the larger countries, which should have the largest vote, and the smaller countries, which should have at least a non-negligible voice in the outcome.

The European Union has never formally adopted the Penrose scheme, but by a process of pragmatic compromise, it has arrived at a very similar allotment of votes, as shown in Figure 1.

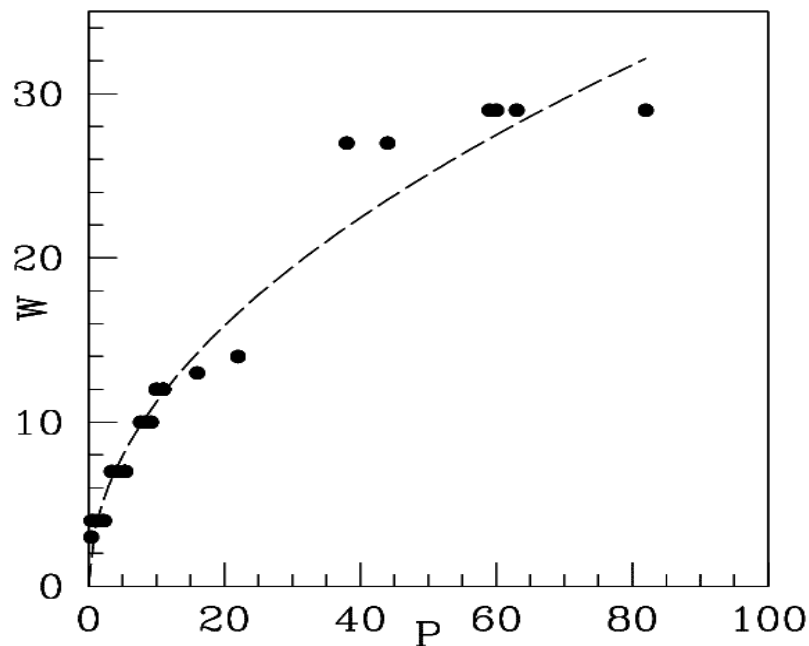


Figure 1. Number of votes W allotted to each member state in the European Council of Ministers as a function of population P (in millions), according to the Treaty of Nice. Germany is the largest state with 82 million, Malta the smallest with 410,000. The ideal Penrose formula is shown as a dashed line (W proportional to square root of P).

If the Penrose scheme was adopted by the Pacific Islands Forum, starting from Niue with one vote, then the votes allotted to the other members of the Forum would be as listed in Table 1. It can be seen that Australia has the largest vote at 34% of the total, as appropriate to its large population, but not a dominant vote.

Even Australia and New Zealand voting together would make up just less than 50% of the vote, and could be outvoted by all the other island states voting as a bloc. Note that in this perhaps unlikely eventuality, the vote of tiny Niue would be enough to swing the balance either way.

This 'ideal' scheme still gives Australia and New Zealand a virtually dominant voice under most circumstances. In this case, with such a disparity in populations between the member states, it might be desirable to adopt an even flatter voting distribution. An alternative scheme is shown in Table 1, where votes are allotted in proportion to the cube root of the population (!), rather than the square root.

Country	Population	Votes (Penrose scheme)	Votes (Alternative scheme)
Australia	23,717,700	121	24
Cook Islands	14,974	3	2
Fiji	859,178	23	8
Kiribati	106,461	8	4
Marshall Islands	56,086	6	3
Micronesia	101,351	8	4
Nauru	10,084	3	2
New Zealand	4,556,270	53	14
Niue	1,613	1	1
Palau	20,901	4	2
Papua New Guinea	7,398,500	68	17
Solomon Islands	581,344	19	7
Tonga	103,252	8	4
Tuvalu	11,323	3	2
Vanuatu	264,652	13	5
Western Samoa	187,820	11	5
Totals	37,991,509	352	104

Table 1. Examples of votes that might be allotted to each member state of the Pacific Islands Forum under the Penrose qualified majority voting scheme, and an alternative scheme mentioned in the text. Population figures according to Wikipedia, 2015.

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