



CSCAP Study Group on Oceania
15-17 April 2007
Wellington, New Zealand

Report of Proceedings

The Mission

"In view of the critical situation in some South Pacific states, the Steering Committee asks CSCAP New Zealand to establish a specialised group on governance in the region with the implications for the wider Asia-Pacific region, and to consult CSCAP Australia, CSCAP PNG, CSCAP Thailand, CSCAP Philippines and CSCAP Indonesia with a view that such a Study Group meet as soon as possible and to report substantively to the next meeting of the Steering Committee."

Introduction

The Oceania Study Group convened at 9.00am on Monday 16th April, with representatives from the CSCAP National Councils of Australia, China, India, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, and the USA and also by His Excellency Dato Sopian Ahmad, the High Commissioner for Malaysia to New Zealand who represented CSCAP Malaysia. A copy of the programme and participants list are at Annexes A and B, respectively. It was a pity that CSCAP colleagues from Philippines, Japan and PNG had to withdraw at late notice. Nonetheless we had a very good exchange of views, enhanced our understanding of some significant problems, catalogued issues of importance to CSCAP and drafted some recommendations.

The Discussions

The four presentations from Dr John Henderson and Dr Rod Alley from CSCAP New Zealand, and Dr David Hegarty and Mr Matthew Allen representing AUS-CSCAP provided a sound basis on which to base informed discussion and deliberation. However, the content of these soundings tended to focus more on Polynesia and Melanesia than perhaps on Micronesia. Nonetheless some treatment and views about that sub region were provided by Mr Patrick Roth of US-CSCAP. Some big picture perspectives from India and China were introduced by Professor Sanjay Chaturvedi and Mr Zhou Xingbao of CSCAP India and China respectively.

Several themes presented during the two full days of the meeting. They concerned the remoteness of these island communities, post colonial difficulties, good governance and capacity building, poverty, demographic growth, natural resource exploitation – particularly fisheries, sustainable development, the negative effects of climate change, aid dependency and how to integrate these small nations into a broader regional engagement with Pacific Asia. Although recent disturbances in the region, namely the coup in Fiji, riots and property destruction in Tonga and the Solomons are all reasons for concern, these troubles did not appear to be getting worse and were indeed under some sort of management. This is not to say that one should be complacent but rather that the principles of Preventive Diplomacy and the practice of Comprehensive & Cooperative Security should be applied in an orchestrated and strategic fashion to enhance the security of the region. A facet of our discussions that was really interesting was that our colleagues from Southeast Asia knew very little about Oceania itself, but once apprised of some learning about these countries appreciated the need for greater awareness and engagement. This was no more true than for the proximate nature of Melanesia with the archipelagic nations of Southeast Asia. It was a real pity that our colleagues from Indonesia and Papua New Guinea were not present at this meeting. There are a number of security related problems emerging in the island of New Guinea that could have significant adverse repercussions regionally and which could in turn benefit from the application of some judicious preventive diplomacy.

Review of Findings

The penultimate session of the meeting focussed on establishing a datum from where to begin to address issues of security in Oceania and to chart a way ahead. The meeting was indebted to Professor Gary Hawke, Co-Chair of CSCAP New Zealand who provided a schematic framework on which to hang these considerations. In the interests of informing the wider CSCAP audience and to promote an opportunity to advance further understanding as required by the mission mandate of the meeting, the basis of that structured process is outlined below:

1. Why is Oceania important to CSCAP members?
2. What can CSCAP contribute in response to that importance?
3. How can CSCAP best make that contribution?

In response to those questions Professor Hawke suggested that answers to these questions would include some of the following issues

Question 1:

i Self Interest

Oceania could be a source of insecurity to the wider Asia-Pacific region especially in respect of new security issues that included:

- transnational crime;
- terrorism (safer trade, identity management);
- competition for natural resources;
- environmental issues, - water etc

ii Opportunity to learn more about regional (and global) issues

- how can an international order with one super-power accommodate the rise of China?
- how do we reconcile international norms with the practice of individual societies as they seek their own chosen balance of freedom and order (including the role of the military)?
- Oceania as a laboratory for “big picture” issues facing the Asia-Pacific region?
- how do we reconcile participation in the modern international economy with preservation of individual cultures?

iii Good International Citizenship

- recognition that developments in CSCAP countries create challenges for **Pasifika** and a desire to assist;¹
- relief of poverty;
- capacity building;
- control resource exploitation by nationals of CSCAP members;
- recognition of the need for co-ordination among aid donors and extending what is already happening.²

Question 2

i Good Analysis

- avoidance of alarmism and hype;
- refinement of media presentations.

¹ The Thai representatives informed the meeting about a recent initiative in which an Action Plan between Thailand and the PIF had been signed focusing on Thai capacity building assistance to PIF island members in health, education, agriculture, and tourism.

² Aid is provided by agencies from Australia, Britain China, European Union, France, Japan, New Zealand the USA, the Asia Development Bank, United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank.

- ii **Promotion of Dialogue**
 - exposure of Pacific Asia “track two” to Oceania and vice versa.
- iii **The ASEAN Regional Forum**
 - to induce the ARF to recognise the footprint of Oceania in the region.

Question 3

Facilitation of “track two” activity within Oceania

- Engage the National University of Samoa, University of the South Pacific (Fiji, Vanuatu, and other campuses); PNG thinktanks, French Universities in Tahiti and New Caledonia plus the University of Guam, University of the FSM and the Micronesian Seminar;
- Engage with the Pasifika Eminent Persons Group;
- Pasifika Governments give most attention to health, education, internal security services, CSCAP could provide Track Two thinking of how to link those concerns to the CSCAP agenda;
- Advocacy within CSCAP governments of recognition of how Oceania relates to their policies;
- Study of Regional Security Architecture? Penetrating below the PIF to Regional Chiefs of Police organisations, Customs linkages throughout the region and thereby into the wider world, plus similar security agencies focussed on issues of comprehensive and cooperative security;
- Engaging the diaspora of Pasifika people throughout the region.

These issues promoted another round of discussions and elicited a number of thoughts that merit further investigation and reflection. Several themes presented including:

- how do we prepare for the damaging effects of climate change on vulnerable communities who live on the threatened atolls of Oceania?
- a new awareness of the pernicious effects of environmental degradation caused by irresponsible resource extraction, especially logging on some island communities;
- there will be adverse repercussions regionally unless the subject of insecurity in Oceania is addressed systematically and thus necessitating the application of some form of preventive diplomacy;
- the role that CSCAP can play on the ground in Oceania is very important in promoting security engagement;
- that CSCAP should go beyond the Pacific Island Forum and engage directly with think tanks in Oceania
- because there is no formal Track Two dialogue in strategic and security issues at the moment CSCAP should lead the way – a further consideration being that there is no forum for scholars, officials and military personnel in their private capacities where they can talk together.
- it would be useful to examine the ongoing Track One dialogue and to engage more with the University of Guam and associated agencies in Micronesia.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The consensus of opinion arising from the meeting agreed that CSCAP should maintain a watching brief on the security of Oceania. One colleague firmly supported the idea that CSCAP must have participation from Track Two colleagues in Oceania and that a means of facilitating it must be found. However, a first step towards engagement could be for another meeting of the Study Group to be held in Northeast Australia where it might be easier and less costly to assemble people from Oceania with those of the immediate ASEAN region. It was recognised that CSCAP would not be able to fund anything more than the normal Study Group expenses and that some external financial support and sponsorship would be necessary to cover the additional expense of bringing appropriate expertise from across Oceania. In all of this it was important to stimulate Track Two engagement in Oceania electronically as a first step – meetings of people that would necessarily flow from that beginning.

Specific recommendations from the meeting included:

1. For CSCAP to engage more positively with Track Two colleagues in Oceania and especially with CSCAP Papua New Guinea;
2. To hold a further meeting of the CSCAP Study Group hosted by AUS-CSCAP (and especially to include representation by CSCAP Indonesia and CSCAP Papua New Guinea) supported by financial support from other agencies to enable participation by Track Two Pasifika representatives. This meeting to focus on 3 below.
3. The development of an “Oceania Regional Security Architecture Project” – this would need to be discussed by CSCAP in some systematic way, but what is envisaged is a small research project usefully strengthened from CSCAP but linked to the positive practice of Preventive Diplomacy;
4. Regular situation reports to the CSCAP Steering Committee.³

Participants of the meeting expressed the view that a useful exchange of views materialised over the two days of dialogue and that a positive way forward had been established.

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CSCAP New Zealand

At Wellington
23 May 2007

³ The CSCAP annual security assessment presently being edited by Professor Brian Job may be a suitable vehicle for this initiative.