

Resource Development in the Pacific Islands: Geopolitics and Regionalism

**Dr. Richard Herr, Professor at the University of Tasmania and
member of Ocean Futures' Affiliated Faculty**

Thursday 27 September, 14.00 – 15.30
Annex (2nd floor) at the FAFO-Centre, Borggata 2B, Grønland, Oslo.

The research institution OCEAN FUTURES has the pleasure of inviting you to a seminar focusing on the Pacific region and resources development – smaller island states and the influence of bigger regional powers.

The Pacific Islands region has an extraordinary concentration of microstates, a factor that colours almost all aspects of the region's affairs. Insularity, limited natural resources, small size and remoteness from global markets are geo-political facts of life for virtually all countries of this region. While most have struggled valiantly to cope with their circumstances, not all have succeeded. Indeed, recently, the constraints imposed by small size and limited resources have led some external sceptics to characterise some Pacific Islands countries (PICs) as "fragile" and, even worse, others as 'failing states'. Naturally, the geopolitics of the Pacific Islands have been affected by the asymmetries of power, as virtually all their extra-regional relationships will be with states that are larger, more powerful and better resourced. The effective autonomy of countries subject to such disparities of power is a matter of concern especially as the range of states with interests in the region has grown steadily over the decades. Regional institutions therefore loom unusually large in the PICs' diplomacy, largely to redress these asymmetrical relations.

Historically, the Islands have not used their geography politically so much as they have been abused by it for centuries. The people of the Pacific Islands rarely have had the opportunity to shape their own destiny. Instead, outside actors have pursued their geo-political interests at the expense of the Islands. Much of the contemporary regional system was created ostensibly for the purpose of enhancing the capacity of the region's microstates to redress power imbalances as they have attempted to develop their resources to advance national interests. However, the overwhelming majority of costs for the regional system that putatively secure the Islands' interests are paid by non-Island states. They do not make these contributions altruistically. Arguably, recent decades have witnessed a decided shift toward a greater saliency for far more extra-regional states than at any time in the past. Technology and significant political changes in the international system explain much of the altered geo-political interest in the Islands but not all of it. The Islands themselves have contributed to this evolving perspective.

Richard Herr has been teaching at the University of Tasmania for thirty-five years and has held a variety of positions including Head of Department. He earned a PhD in Political Science from Duke University and has written approximately 100 monographs, book chapters, and journal articles.

The presentation including discussion will last for about one and a half hour.

Please register for the seminar on mail ocean@ocean-futures or by phone 22 08 87 52 by Tuesday 25 September.

Welcome to a new Ocean Futures seminar!

Kind regards,



Jan Magne Markussen

Daglig leder/Director