

THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC AT THE TURN OF THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES - MAINTAINING THE SPHERE OF INFLUENCE BY PROVIDING SECURITY TO MICROSTATES?

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Abstract

Following two waves of decolonization in the Pacific (1962-1970 and 1974-1980), the situation of island states in this region have changed radically. Finally, independent microstates have gained their legal international opportunity to decide on own internal and regional policy. Nonetheless, post-colonial relations in the region were largely influenced by the Pacific Ring powers, led by the United States, which consequently created a unique local system. Such struggle in order to uphold influence in the Pacific occurred in the post-war period initially between the USA and Japan. Two imperial approaches emerged from these international movements, which were implemented in the diplomacy of both countries: “New world order” and its Japanese response – “New regional order”. Government in Washington maintains close relations with states in Oceania by changing their formal names (free association, unincorporated and unorganized territory, unincorporated and organized territory, commonwealth within the USA). In addition to organizational or scientific activity, the most important element of American policy towards the states in Oceania is the regional security shaping. The military presence of the US troops, regular RIMPAC naval exercises, growing diplomatic and economic investments in the South Pacific islands consolidate the image of a just sheriff of the new world order, a defender of young democracies on the verge of poverty struggling with civilization problems.

Keywords: USA, Oceania, South Pacific, Security in the Pacific, Sphere of Influence

INTRODUCTION

The issue of security or cooperation in the field of defence in the Pacific Ocean is not sufficiently analysed in European literature. Integration processes in the area of politics, law or economics in the Pacific, however, are attracting more and more attention by the scientists across the world. The terms “Oceania” and “Pacific” are not legal terms, so their definitions cannot be found in legal acts. The subjective scope of the geopolitical region of the South Pacific is therefore the southern part of the Pacific Ocean covering the following sovereign states: Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and the Solomon Islands; the associated state with New Zealand: Niue and the Cook Islands; and the associated states with the United States: the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Palau and the

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Marshall Islands; as well as, which is associated with indirect impact on security development or integration, US dependent territories.

Therefore, the role of the United States in the South Pacific at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, which is the subject of this article, will refer to countries¹, which lie south of the equator. The northern part of the Pacific Ocean is the American state of Hawaii, subject to the US internal jurisdiction, or territories belonging to Asian states. Consequently, the North Pacific is outside the scope of this article and will not be discussed in it.

The South Pacific is indeed the future-oriented region due to its geographical, cultural and political specificity. Hence, an in-depth analysis of this issue is justified both in the aspect of public policy in its foreign dimension, as well as an introduction to the most important paradigms in the field of Public international law. Bearing in mind the obvious increase in the powers of Southeast Asia, the so-called “Confucian capitalists”, one should not forget the South Pacific region, which is no longer an isolated area. From the point of view of the global economy, the unexplored natural deposits at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean are of the greatest importance too. Another essential issue are the resources lying in the internal economic zones of the Pacific island states, as well as intact, and therefore very attractive, markets. Hereafter, in addition to political and humanitarian development integration, the countries of the South Pacific are increasingly looking for formal and legal solutions to strengthen their relations. This also applies to requesting for protection from global powers. The US is in the lead in this nomenclature. The 21st century presents significant changes in geopolitics, where a highly beneficial (profitable and civilizational development) form of cooperation for the smallest, poor countries appears to be regional cooperation - whether strictly intra-regional or with an entity from outside the region. Here, it should be given some values that effectively refute the “myth of paradise” of the Pacific countries: GDP per capita in Australia is over 56 thousand USD, in New Zealand – 37 thousand USD, while in Fiji – only 9 thousand USD, while in the Solomon Islands or PNG –1900 USD². This article puts forward the thesis that the role of the United States in the South Pacific at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries was to maintain the sphere of influence through measures providing security to microstates.

1. New Countries in the Pacific Resulting from Decolonization Processes

States, as the most important and influential entities in the field of international law, possess decision-making power to what extent they want to cooperate with each other. The willing element is a condition *sine qua non* for establishing international relations, including those in the field of security. It is the sovereign states that are the founders and members of many supranational bodies, both universal and local. International organizations seem to be the most common and known form of international

¹ Here the legal and political science distinction between the terms have to be considered: a state and a country. The first term refers to a sovereign unit in international law, while a country is a colloquial term, and it does not reflect the full subjectivity having by a state along with its legal personality to possess rights and duties on the international arena.

² Date for the year 2015 by the World Bank:

http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?end=2015&name_desc=true&start=2015&view=map Access on: 18.08.2019.

cooperation to date³. The diversity of forms of regional cooperation allows states to tailor established partnerships or alliances in line with national interests, as well as to choose from a broad catalogue available in international law (hard law or soft law methods). The legal, political and often also economic option to choose the most suitable scheme leads to the creation of an intriguing network of partners, also in the field of national or international security.

The South Pacific is very complex and diversified in terms of the diversity of international legal statuses functioning with the region. No other geopolitical region consists of such different subjects of international relations. The Pacific Ocean, being the largest ocean in the world, covers over 40 sovereign states and over 20 dependent territories⁴. Subjects of international law, and therefore not only states operating in the Pacific, are called PICT. The abbreviation is derived from the English acronym of the *Pacific Islands countries and territories*. States located on the outskirts of the Pacific Ocean are called the Pacific Rim⁵, which shows their belonging primarily to the continents of Asia or America.

In the wake of two waves of decolonization (1962-1970 and 1974-1980), the situation in the Pacific region had changed. Gaining independence finally gave those nations international legal possibility to decide on their own foreign policy. The shaping of post-colonial relations in the region, both bilaterally and multilaterally, was influenced by the Pacific Ring states, mainly by the US. Development of cooperation in the Pacific was on one hand initiated by some of the newly created states, but on the other - it was strongly supported by governments in Washington, Beijing, Tokyo and Moscow. These two directions have eventually created a unique local system. After the end of the Cold War in 1991, bipolar division of the world finally stopped dichotomously divided nations, thereby increasing the sense of belonging to their own region - with neighbouring countries sharing similar history, economic and political systems. Hegemon, which the United States became, began to strongly influence through close, bilateral relations around the world, including in the Pacific Ocean.

This was happening in isolation from dichotomous affiliation to the capitalist West or post-communist East. Such “superpower” approach of American foreign policy was dictated by the desire to maintain close, dependent relations with the newly created Oceania governments, which were just forming their alliances and could easily be acquired as a partner in exchange for providing development assistance or security. The PICT did not want to return to metropolis-colony relations hence the economically prosperous US government seemed a more sensible solution than maintaining cooperation with Great Britain or France. This awareness of the need to turn against the old colonial powers, but at the same time receiving proposals for *carte blanche* cooperation increased the openness of microstates to US interference in their own interests.

³ However, it cannot be said that this will always be the case. It is up to the states, founders of organizations and signatories to international agreements if they would prefer to delegate sovereign powers in another way, by a separate organizational form or an institution not formally functioning in the future. International law, regulating relations between entities, may be therefore freely changed by its creators, if it is in accordance with their will.

⁴ The calculation made by the author.

⁵ The idea of ‘Pacific Rim’ illustrating the form of regional cooperation will be presented later in this article.

The area of the South Pacific is diverse not only politically, but also geographically and culturally. It is divided into three groups of islands: Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia⁶. These subregions are one of the most diverse clusters, despite their geographical proximity. Separation is observed in the tradition and history of nations, including the attitude towards colonization, a sense of national identity, ending with models of creating own position in the region or globally. Therefore, each individual entity located in the Pacific will present a completely different approach to statehood, course of (re)gaining independence, maintaining close relations with former colonial forces, as well as with the US government⁷.

Pursuant to International law, three types of entities are to be distinguished: states, dependent territories (dependencies) and free-associated states⁸. Diverse statuses result in a different form and degree of integration in the region, as well as possibility to participate in establishing security, also as a part of an alliance with the United States. It should be remembered that the basic international legal entities - states - have an unlimited scope of self-determination and can also take sovereign action in the field of security. Such entities in the subregion of Melanesia are: Australia, Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu; in Polynesia: New Zealand, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu; while in Micronesia: Kiribati and Nauru.

In contrast, two further types of entities - dependent territories and associated states - are *de iure* managed by the governments of partner states. They must therefore comply with the standards set by the larger, more developed entity. Despite the fact that most dependent countries have the power to enact their own legislation, however, in order to adopt acts and made them valid they must comply with the law of the partner state. This legal situation applies to New Caledonia - special overseas territory of France, Tokelau - territory of New Zealand, Niue and the Cook Islands - countries associated with New Zealand, Pitcairn Islands - British overseas territory, Rapa Nui - territory of Chile, and French Polynesia, as well as Wallis and Futuna - French overseas communities. The United States also entered into partner relations with the following PICT: American Samoa - as non-integrated and unorganized territory of the USA, Palau, FSM and the Marshall Islands - as associated states, Guam - non-incorporated territory of the United States, and the Union of Northern Marian Islands – being organized territory of the community status.

2. America's Pacific

Without going into the details of every entity operating in the South Pacific, one should, though, outline US legal and political relations with its closest Pacific microstate partners. FSM, Palau and the Marshall Islands are affiliated with the US, which means they are formally bound by the jurisdiction of the government in Washington. The cooperation is carried out under three separate bilateral agreements called Compact of

⁶ The distinction into three sub-regions was first made by Frenchman Jules Dumont d'Urville. The researcher was guided by the need to identify geographical and ethnic clusters of islands in the Pacific Ocean.

⁷ I. Ch. Campbell 1989. *A History of the Pacific Islands*, University of Canterbury Press: Christchurch, p.40-135; S. R. Fischer 2002. *A History of the Pacific Islands*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, p.23-42.

⁸ Free associated states were codified by the UN Resolution from 1960. Compare: Resolution defining the three options for self-determination GA Res 1541, XV (1960), Principle VI.

free association, COFA. COFA with the Marshall Islands⁹ and FSM¹⁰ was signed in 1986, while with Palau in 1994¹¹. The main premise of the partnership is to commit the United States to provide economic and military support in exchange for constant access to the military bases and resources¹². What should be emphasized here, thanks to constant financial assistance, all three American free association states have the highest level of GDP among every PICT¹³.

American Samoa is managed by the US Department of the Interior with its branch - Office of Island Affairs. This is not stated *expressis verbis* in the content of the American Samoa Constitution, however, Section 6 regulates the oath of senior officials for the constitution of the United States of America, while not Samoan¹⁴. Thanks to American citizenship, islanders can travel to the US, enjoy duty-free access to the American market, while the salary system corresponds to a more favourable local economy, not a nationwide one, as the enterprises on the island earn a lot on commercial contacts, mainly military ones¹⁵.

Another group of US-dependent countries in Micronesia are Guam and the Mariana Islands. These countries have international *sui generis* status as both these territories are managed by the US Office of Insular Affairs¹⁶. However, Guam is a non-incorporated territory of the United States of America, and therefore selected sections of the federal constitution apply, while the Marianas are in a political union as the US Commonwealth. The island of Guam has the largest oil reservoirs among all resources of this type used by the American aviation. In the 21st century, this territory is used by the United States Army to conduct air and sea exercises¹⁷. Guam is also a destination for economic migrants from other American islands. The wave of emigration increased after the signing of the COFA between the US and FSM and the Marshall Islands¹⁸, which gave their inhabitants American citizenship and consequently free movement of people.

⁹ COFA with the Marshall Islands came into force on 21 October 1986, but it was amended in May 2004: Compact of Free Association Agreement between the United States of America and the Marshall Islands Treaties and other International Acts (Series 04-501) from 30 April 2003.

¹⁰ COFA with the Federated States of Micronesia came into force on 3 November 1986, ale but it was amended in 2004: Compact of Free Association Agreement between the United States of America and the Micronesia Treaties and other International Acts (Series 04-625) from 14 May 2003.

¹¹ COFA z Palau is valid since 1994 and until now was not amended. Compact of Free Association between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Palau (48 USC 1931 note; Public Law 99-658) from 1 October 1994

¹² More on this topic see: US Department of State: www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/1839.htm, www.state.gov/p/eap/ci/rm/, www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/1840.htm Access on: 18.08.2019.

¹³ T. K. Jayaraman 2016, *Regional Integration in the Pacific* in: E. Fanta, T. M. Shaw, V. T. Tang (ed.), *Comparative Regionalisms for Development in the 21st Century: Insights from the Global South*, Routledge: New York, p.107.

¹⁴ Revised Constitution of American Samoa from 17 October 1960, Section 6.

¹⁵ Radio programs: *American Samoa must consider independence* on "Radio Australia" from 18.05.2012 and *Pacific News Minute: American Samoa Reconsiders US Ties* on „Hawaii Public Radio" from 18.11.2015.

¹⁶ US Department of the Interior, Office of Insular Affairs: www.doi.gov/oia/islands/guam, www.doi.gov/oia/islands/cnmi Access on: 18.08.2019.

¹⁷ R. Crocombe 2007. *Asia in the Pacific Islands: Replacing the West*, University of the South Pacific: Suva, p. 353.

¹⁸ K. Maegawa 2006. *Community Beyond the Border: An Ethnological Study of Chuukese Migration in Micronesia* in: H. Kleinschmidt, *Migration, Regional Integration and Human Security: The Formation and Maintenance of Transnational Spaces*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd.: Aldershot, p.142, 145.

The economy of FSM and Palau remains dependent on US budget transfers. As it has already been indicated, the basic premise of a free association is to ensure internal and foreign security for microstates that open their territory to the armies of another state (US). As for the Marshall Islands, the immediate reason for their occupation of these areas was the need to build a nuclear defence system: the US Army Kwajalein Atoll Reagan Missile Test Site, of a high importance to the US missile safety network¹⁹. Assistance from the US (almost USD 1.5 billion per year) and fees for the lease of Kwajalein as part of a military base form the basis of the country's economy²⁰.

3. Building the Sphere of Influence by the American Government

The end of colonial perceptions is called "End of Insularity". The English noun "insularity" means the abstract concept of backwoods, provinciality, parochialism and narrowness of views, but is also an adjective from the noun "island". The play on words reflects the process of decolonization in the Pacific, when the islands ceased to be isolated, and thus, in terms of ideology, their subordination to metropolises came to an end.

The issue of American interests in the Pacific Ocean has always been open and up-to-date. When the national interests focus particularly on defence or security matters, Washington government's policy remains very precise and clear. It is the United States of America, the global "sheriff", who constitutes the most solid (politically and logistically reliable) power to ensure order in the world. During the Cold War (1947-1991), the Pacific was the natural boundary between antagonists. It should not be surprising, then, that building close relations (and if necessary even forms of dependence or political control) with microstates was seen as a guarantee of strengthening its strategic position in this region. And although more than a quarter of a century has passed since the fall of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the main motivator of the security system remains the same - armed defence against Russian aggression to the West²¹.

Peace and security have been, and continue to be, a key factor in deepening close relations in the Pacific. Cooperation in the field of security had various dimensions over time. We are talking here about four periods: 1) just after the end of the Second World War; 2) during the nuclear crisis, along with the nuclear bomb testing in the Pacific Ocean; 3) during the Cold War; 4) after the Cold War²². More efforts are now being

¹⁹ Central Intelligence Agency: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rm.html>
Access on: 18.08.2019.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ J. C. Dorrance 1992. *The United States and the Pacific Islands*, Praeger: Ann Arbor; R. O'Rourke 2014. *China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities – Background and Issues for Congress*, in: D. Lovelace (ed.), *Terrorism: Commentary on Security Documents*, Volume 136: *Assessing the Reorientation of U. S. National Security Strategy Toward the Asia-Pacific*, Oxford University Press: New York, p.279-285.

²² The controversial supra-regional Security Pact "ANZUS", operating in the years 1951-2010, is the best example. However, the alliance between the United States and New Zealand was broken after the diplomatic conflict over the creation of the nuclear-free zone in the Pacific. To date, New Zealanders are sceptical of any American policy because they feel cheated. The author has found this out many times during her stay in New Zealand in 2015-2016.

made to unite countries in the Pacific with the aim of counteracting terrorism, together with its denominator, most affecting the South Pacific islands - piracy²³.

The Australian-New Zealand agreement (the Canberra Pact) reflected concerns about the growing US ambitions in the Pacific region in the post-war period. The bilateral agreement was signed in 1944 by in fact the closest US allies from the war. However, this treaty should be considered as a mutual agreement towards further bilateral cooperation instead of a military alliance *sensu stricto*²⁴. In addition, it should be noted that New Zealand experienced a threat from the US for its island dependencies just after the war. The New Zealand Prime Minister, Peter Fraser, forbade any claims regarding annulment of land in Samoa (part of the US)²⁵ and the Cook Islands. This legal case set out the American side's argument to raise any demands for military bases in the New Zealand Realm and other non-American islands for the future. In addition, New Zealand decided to buy military equipment in existing bases. These efforts do present a broader strategy against the entry of a larger imperial state into the Pacific²⁶.

The struggle to maintain influence in the Pacific took place in the post-war period between the US and Japan. Two imperial approaches emerged from these international activities, which were carried out in the diplomacy of both countries: "The new world order" and the response to it – "The new regional order". The first slogan referred to the American approach to the need for establishment new rules in the global arena. However, the newly emerged states were characterized by a growing anti-American attitude. The opposite motto to the "New World Order" arose as a result of the search of the PICT for a better partner in international trade. Hence, on the initiative of the Japanese government, the term "New Regional Order" was created. It was indeed an Asian response to unwanted American influence in the South Pacific region. Eventually, Pacific countries began to open their markets to China and the USSR (and after to the Russian Federation). The purpose of this change in politics was motivated to reduce the economic dominance of the US, Japan and the then European Communities²⁷. The third main partner - Russia - was reluctant to allow Japan or the US to economically penetrate the Pacific region, so rich in natural resources and newly erected national markets. Another agreement between the governments in Tokyo and Washington (preventive to any possible actions made by the government in Moscow) can be perceived as the example of "politics of extensive peace". The mutual declaration of peace in the Pacific was aimed at highlighting the American and Japanese factors in the region by

²³ Compare A. Graf 2011. *Countering Piracy and Maritime Terrorism in South East Asia and off the Horn of Africa*, PiraT-Working Papers on Maritime Security Nr. 5, April 2011; L. Joubert 2013. *The extent of maritime terrorism and piracy: a comparative analysis*, "South African Journal of Military Studies" 41/1; E. S. Nelson 2012. *Terrorism and Piracy: Existing and Potential Threats*, "Global Security Studies" 3/1.

²⁴ Art. 2 of the Australian-New Zealand Agreement 1944 from 21 January 1944.

²⁵ Speech of Dr. Iati Iati from the University of Otago, *Watching Their Customary Lands Slip Away? The Implications of Applying the Torrens System to Samoan Customary Land Tenure*, New Zealand Studies Association (NZSA) Conference, Lugano 1.07.2016.

²⁶ J. A. Bennett 2010. *The American Imperial Threat to New Zealand's Pacific Dependencies in World War Two*, in: I. Conrich, D. Alessio (ed.) *New Zealand, France and the Pacific*, Kakapo Books, Nottingham, p. 45-53; more on the Canberra Pact: W. D. McIntyre and W. Jim 1971. *Gardner Speeches and documents on New Zealand history*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, p.368-378.

²⁷ J. Kukułka 2007. *Historia współczesnych stosunków międzynarodowych; 1945-2000 z kalendarium 2001-2006*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar: Warsaw, p.591 and above.

strengthening multilateral assistance to the island states²⁸. As these temporary *ad hoc* partnerships show, rivalry for the spheres of influence in the Pacific was so significant that the not so long-ago former war enemies were able to reconcile their interests to overtake other powers in searching for new allies.

4. American Initiatives in The Pacific of More Formalised Character

Another American initiative, of already more formalised character, was launched in 1967. Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC) was aimed to unite the most developed countries of the Pacific basin: USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Japan, in a common goal to jointly develop the Pacific region (and therefore non-Council members). China and other developing countries joined the organization later²⁹. The institution similar in terms of openness to accept various partners was the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC). PECC was established as the Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference due to the less formal concept of regional conference meetings. This council began its activity at the Canberra seminar in 1980, when 11 parties agreed to create an independent regional mechanism. The common goal here was market-driven integration through the promotion of economic cooperation. The seminar was attended by Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, USA and only three Pacific countries - PNG, Fiji and Tonga. Representatives of PBEC and the Pacific Trade and Development Conference also participated in the conference³⁰.

In the decades of the nuclear Pacific testing in the years 1946-1994, PICT were formally dependent on developed and influential states. This period in the Pacific history was one of the most difficult, as its effects are also visible now. Americans were testing in the territory of the Marshall Islands and Kiribati in 1946-1958 and 1962, respectively, the British - in Australia and Kiribati in 1952-1963, while the French - in French Polynesia in 1966-1996³¹. However, injuries in people and nature were not the only effects of testing. Growing anti-nuclear manifestations of dissatisfied islanders should be given as political and social effects since the 1970s. This eventually led to the establishment of the idea of the nuclear-free Pacific. New Zealand introduced in 1987 the New Zealand Nuclear Free Act, which included a clause on a general prohibition on entering any nuclear-armed ships onto New Zealand waters or its ports³². This norm, however, was read by the US as a breach of the provisions of the Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty (ANZUS)³³. Moreover, the US government issued a negative

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p.309-310; United States Note to Japan from 26 November 1941 Dept. of State Bulletin 129 (13). This non-binding document was raised to the rank of an international agreement in 1951 as the Security Treaty between the United States and Japan from 8 September 1951.

²⁹ J. Kukulka, *op. cit.*, p. 310-311; S. Terry, *op. cit.*

³⁰ Over time, PECC opened its membership to representatives of, among others, ASEAN, China or Russia. A list of Member States and organizations involved can be found on the website of the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council: www.pecc.org/about/member-committees Access on: 18.08.2019.

³¹ S. Firth, K. von Strokirch 1997. *A Nuclear Pacific*, in: D. Denoon, M. Meleisea (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, p.324-358.

³² New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Act 1987, art. 9, par. 2.

³³ Compare footnote Nr.23; M. Green 2008. *The Changing Face of New Zealand Diplomacy*, "New Zealand International Review", 33/6.

opinion on the introduction of the 1985 Rarotonga Treaty establishing a nuclear-free zone³⁴.

Cooperation in specific sectors, including in the field of security, has been almost always developing thanks to foreign funding. This regional attitude can be observed primarily in American policy of so-called “indirect rule” toward PICT. Such policy involves actions aimed at gaining influence through the use of non-formal methods. This is strongly manifested in financing of projects, especially humanitarian ones, media control, legal and economic consultancy launched for the Pacific governments. The idea of the “Pacific Community” is an example of American indirect rule. The Pacific Community policy was directed at the regional integration of local communities regardless of their multifaceted differences, present at the civilization, as well as economic development³⁵. Such regional policy is illustrated by the activities of the East-West Center. It was founded in Honolulu, Hawaii in 1960. The main purpose of this educational and research institution is to promote better relations and mutual understanding of the peoples of the US and Asia-Pacific. East-West Center launched in 1980 the assistance strategy called the Pacific Islands Development Program (PIDF). His main assumptions were fair and sustainable social and economic development³⁶.

The Pacific Community is the “pan-Pacific” concept. Initially it was supported by private individuals, associations or foundations, after which it was formally adopted by the countries of the region. Earlier, in the interwar period, the American Institute of Pacific Relations played a key role in the process of regional cooperation³⁷. The vital intention of the US government was as if the Pacific Community would remain a non-alternative idea of cooperation in the Pacific³⁸. Washington assumed the establishment of highly formalized cooperation, modelled on the Euroatlantic one. However, with the current stage of regionalism in the Pacific Ocean, this is impossible to achieve³⁹.

Formal cooperation of the Pacific Rim under the American umbrella started in 1989 through the regional organization - Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, APEC. APEC was established as the US initiative of as a response to the uncontrolled, according to the American side, Japanese interference in the affairs of microstates in the Pacific⁴⁰. Regionalism cultivated through the Pacific Rim is, apart from APEC, the main contemporary form of American interference in the affairs of PICT. The initiator of both institutions is the East-West Center, Hawaiian research hub described earlier. The Pacific Rim Cities project is another American driven discussion forum. It serves the US to provide dimensions of further urbanization to the Pacific Ring states, as well as to

³⁴ 13 parties declared a ban on any use, testing and possession of any type of nuclear weapon on their territory. South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty from 6 August 1985, art. 3, 5-6.

³⁵ E. Halizak, R. Kuźniar 2006. *Stosunki międzynarodowe: geneza, struktura, dynamika*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego: Warszwa, p.8.

³⁶ East-West Center: www.eastwestcenter.org/pacific-islands-development-program/about-pidp Access on: 18.08.2019.

³⁷ More on this topic: E. Halizak 2006. *Wspólnota Pacyfiku a Wspólnota Wschodnioazjatycka*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe „Scholar”: Warsaw, p. 38-39,45; P. F. Hooper 1988. *The Institute of Pacific Relations and the Origins of Asian and Pacific Studies*, “Pacific Affairs” 61/1, p. 98-121.

³⁸ E. Halizak 1999. *Stosunki międzynarodowe w regionie Azji i Pacyfiku*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR: Warsaw, p.142.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p.437.

⁴⁰ Japan is now an equal member of APEC. J. Rymarczyk 2010. *Międzynarodowe stosunki gospodarcze*, Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne: Warsaw, p. 379; *APEC in Charts 2015*, Policy Support Unit, November 2015.

integrate the whole region⁴¹, just in line with the interests of the government in Washington.

APEC currently accounts for over 60% of the global GDP, hence the US interest in this organization cannot be overestimated. Already in 1993, at the Seattle conference, representatives of the then President Bill Clinton openly exerted diplomatic pressure on the Pacific states. In addition to members of this organization, a wider group of politicians and officials from the Secretary of the Pacific Community (SPC) and PECC was invited. PICT agreed to transform APEC into a free trade area modelled on the EU. The total withdrawal from customs duties was on hand to the Americans, for whom microstates would have been the open (and unlimited) sales market, and then their own well-settled sphere of influence. However, Asian countries headed by China were afraid of diversification of economies in the emerging region. Hence, the economic integration plan was eventually stopped⁴².

The same goes with the, commonly used in scientific terminology, name of “Asia Pacific”. It appears to be unnatural, as it does not derive from any geological (geotectonical), political or cultural classification. According to the doctrine of American foreign policy, establishing a link between the regions of East Asia and the Pacific did not make any pragmatic sense. This dichotomy formed two separate geopolitical clusters of countries with different interests. The distinction was noticed internationally thanks to the US intervention in Japanese regional policy. Washington convinced the government in Tokyo to regard their neighbourhood as “Asia and the Pacific” rather than “East Asia”. Thanks to this diplomatic move, the US was able to expand its influence over Southeast Asian countries, thus justifying the need for own presence in this area⁴³.

The high importance of the Pacific region in the world, along with all its connections with Asia, is still noticeable in US foreign policy. According to Hilary Clinton, former Secretary of State (2009-2013), the US government was aware of its ineffective operations in the Pacific Ocean. This, in turn, required further diplomatic changes adequate to the uniqueness of this geopolitical region:

“One of the most important tasks of American statecraft over the next decade will therefore be to lock in a substantially increased investment — diplomatic, economic, strategic, and otherwise — in the Asia-Pacific region. The Asia-Pacific has become a key driver of global politics. (...) What does that regional strategy look like? (...) The challenges of today’s rapidly changing region — from territorial and maritime disputes to new threats to freedom of navigation to the heightened impact of natural disasters — require that the United States pursue a more geographically distributed, operationally resilient, and politically sustainable force posture”⁴⁴.

⁴¹ M. P. Smith 1989. *Pacific Rim Cities in the World Economy: Comparative Urban and Community Research, Vol. 2*, Transaction Publishers: New Brunswick, p.278-283.

⁴² T. Yuzawa 2006. *The Evolution of Preventive Diplomacy in the ASEAN Regional Forum: Problems and Prospects*, “Asian Survey” 46/5, p. 591-596; R. W. Baker 1993. *Pacific Summit in Seattle: Testing Clinton’s Asia-Pacific Policy*, Asia Pacific Issues, Analysis from the East-West Center No. 9, November 1993, p.4.

⁴³ G. Hawthorn 2000. *Azja i rejon Pacyfiku*, Prószyński i S-ka: Warsaw, p.16.

⁴⁴ H. Clinton, *America’s Pacific Century*, (11.11.2011) available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/americas-pacific-century/> Access on: 18.08.2019.

5. Ensuring Security of the Microstates by the United States

The US involvement in Pacific regional policy covers many issues, from climate change, to stabilizing democracy or improving the prosperity of the Pacific population, but it is strengthening the military protection in the Pacific Ocean, which is a real advantage in maintaining the American sphere of influence⁴⁵.

The Pacific is a unique geopolitical region. First of all, the specificity of the region is created by its marine environment. From the purely geographical point of view, it occupies 10 thousand kilometres from east to west and 5 thousand kilometres from north to south. The distance between countries or even islands belonging to the same country is counted in thousands of kilometres⁴⁶. The South Pacific region consists of microstates, what implies the need for dealing with problems related to “minority” in political and geographical terms. However, what seems more important here is such physical separation from any continental areas. There is a high degree of dependence on maritime transport and to a lesser extent to aviation, which is associated with a lack of financial resources for aircraft, but also undeveloped airports and any kind of aviation infrastructure.

National security should be considered in a double way also in the South Pacific. Providing one of the most basic and key interests for permanent existence of a state is military and energy security⁴⁷. The aforementioned ANZUS tripartite alliance was to be responsible for military security. After its breakup in 2010 it was, however, not decided to establish any new military organization in the region, neither with a partner from outside the Pacific (like the USA) nor of the closed membership with the PIC only. Yet governments of New Zealand and the USA signed the Wellington Declaration in 2010⁴⁸, which provides an updated view on the issue of military cooperation in the Pacific. First, Americans and New Zealanders wanted to introduce a more practical system of cooperation, having rapid and coordinated data exchange, including regular meetings of foreign ministers with defence debates. Secondly, such systemic cooperation is expected to result in an increase in binding and substantive dialogue at the governmental, military and expert levels⁴⁹.

Undoubtedly, the role of the United States in the South Pacific at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries in maintaining the sphere of influence by ensuring the security to microstates is being implemented through the bi-annual RIMPAC manoeuvres. The rejection of the common enemy (USSR) in the Pacific in 1971 led to strengthening of interoperability under US leadership (and its sponsorship). It should be clearly

⁴⁵ Based on the speech made by A. R. Frelick, Department Director of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands at the East Asian Pacific Office of the US Government: <http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2009/07/126656.htm> Access on: 18.08.2019.

⁴⁶ For example, the land territory of the Cook Islands in proportion to its sea area is 1:8000. M. Jędrusik 2005. *Wyspy tropikalne: W poszukiwaniu dobrobytu*, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warsaw, p.155-159.

⁴⁷ The Pacific Power Association is the most important organization in the Pacific Ocean in the field of energy security. The association deals with the direct coordination and cooperation of states in the use of electricity, electricity generating devices, private suppliers and the issue of intra-regional or external subsidies for energy development: <http://www.ppa.org.fj/what-is-ppa> Access on: 18.08.2019.

⁴⁸ Wellington Declaration on a New Strategic Partnership Between New Zealand and the United States from 4 November 2010.

⁴⁹ M. Pugh 1989. *The ANZUS Crisis, Nuclear Visiting and Deterrence*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge; Department of State: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2010/11/150401.htm> Access on: 18.08.2019.

emphasized that such cooperation on security issues is not based on any multilateral agreement or even memorandum of understanding⁵⁰. Moreover, the successful conviction of the Pacific allies to purchase American ships, weapons and aircraft is undeniable here too⁵¹.

RIMPAC is an acronym of the Rim of the Pacific⁵². It was initiated by the United States Pacific Command, the naval forces responsible for the Pacific basin. Originally, only 5 parties were involved: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Great Britain, and the USA as the founder. 26 countries participated in RIMPAC 2016. Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Brazil and Israel participated for the first time in the joint exercise in the 2018 edition. This reflects the importance of RIMPAC, as well as its potential goes far beyond the geographical framework of the ocean. Manoeuvres take place during two summer months on the Hawaii archipelago. Supervision is exercised by the Pacific Fleet Command in cooperation with the Coast Guard, the naval corps and the Hawaiian National Guard. Having in total the fleet of 26 states, 45 ships, 5 submarines, more than 200 aircraft and 25,000 personnel, the United States has established the world's largest multinational naval training. In addition, RIMPAC provides unique, unprecedented, global military manoeuvres to support and sustain maritime cooperation⁵³.

The initial, strategically obvious but never officially declared, implication of RIMPAC is demonstration of US strength, in both military and political sense. The multinational army, using its boast naval equipment in the largest possible number, presents war capabilities that are difficult to compare in the world. In other words, RIMPAC gathers states that could fight any common enemy under US supervision (and therefore according with its interest). Secondly, the political perception of those manoeuvres and their perception is a kind of deterrent to any potential threat. Such an unofficial demonstration of strength is undertaken in order to defend Western civilization along with its values. But against whom? Again, the Russian Federation appears to be the potential opponent. Russia has never been invited to participate in RIMPAC⁵⁴. However, this did not prevent the Kremlin from participating in the exercises. The Russian destroyer and intelligence ship were following one of the American navy ships during RIMPAC 2016. China adopted a similar strategy in 2014. In this case, though, the Chinese navy was able to officially participate in the exercise, but it has expanded its national delegation despite the previous agreement. Importantly, through cooperation with China and simultaneous isolation of Russia, the government in Washington sends a clear signal who can be its ally and who cannot⁵⁵. This in turn draws a sharp border between superpowers, just as it was during the Cold War.

⁵⁰ E-mail to the author from Chuck Bella, Director of Digital Media at the U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs from 28.10.2017.

⁵¹ R. Hunt and R. Girrier 2015. *RIMPAC builds partnerships that last*, in: S. Tangredi (ed.), *The U.S. Naval Institute on International Naval Cooperation*, Naval Institute Press: Annapolis, p.89.

⁵² The singular word "exercise" has been in operation since the beginning of the manoeuvres.

⁵³ E-mail to the author from Lt. Lenay Rotklein, Deputy Public Affairs Office at the U.S. Third Fleet from 12.12.2014.

⁵⁴ In the 2012 edition, the Russian Navy was invited as an observer, but without the possibility of using its military capabilities. Also, Russia's participation in the subsequent exercise in 2014 was cancelled by the Moscow government due to unwanted by the US military cooperation on the occasion of the invasion of Ukraine.

⁵⁵ K. R. Bolton, *US Navy Rim of The Pacific (RIMPAC) War Games, Coopting China, Isolating Russia?* available at the website of Centre for Research on Globalization: <https://www.globalresearch.ca/us-sponsored-rim-of-the-pacific-rimpac-war-games-coopting-china-isolating-russia/5535240> and *World War*

RIMPAC is also treated as official opportunity to learn about the tactical abilities and military backroom of co-partners. Such information is often a strict state secret due to its strategic importance for national defence. However, in the case of manoeuvres under the leadership of the US navy, Washington is able to form real, that is operational, leadership over delegations of other (sovereign!) states. All this is for detecting strengths and possible weaknesses, which makes it easier for the US to build security in the Pacific⁵⁶.

Another international implication of RIMPAC are events accompanying the military manoeuvres. Diplomats, politicians and the highest-rank representatives of partner countries make decisions behind the scenes, which then become binding. Through such paradiplomacy, the United States has a real impact on mapping geopolitical vectors through military cooperation. In other words, such military cooperation is perceived and de iure has to be read as an informal form of cooperation rather than a binding military alliance. In addition, the exchange of information between ambassadors, generals and admirals, as well as representatives of Congress and the Pacific parliamentarians and businessmen leads to consolidation of the Pacific as a place of strategic importance for the world peace⁵⁷.

Finally, it should also be noted that the role of the United States in providing security to microstates at the beginning of the 21st century is a crisis response in the Pacific Ring of Fire⁵⁸. This Pacific Ocean seismic belt is the area where giant climate changes occur, such as floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis and cyclones. The American Pacific Fleet Command has declared its readiness and logistical capacity for humanitarian aid operations, in the case of the typhoon that passed through the Philippines in 2017⁵⁹.

CONCLUSION

Based on the examples presented in this article as if the US interferes in functioning of the South Pacific microstate, it can be concluded that the US has been striving to maintain its post-war sphere of influence since the beginning of nationalization in Oceania. The government in Washington has been using the need for ensuring security for its island partners to achieve this goal. As indicated in this article, American diplomacy has been focused on one goal for decades - to make PICT politically, financially and militarily dependent on Washington. It is necessary to stress that the majority, not to say all, of the South Pacific countries were very eager to receive American humanitarian aid in exchange for opening their markets, strategically important airports or places for military bases. And although in the discourse there are still anti-American moods and fiery opposition of the islanders against the US superpower policy (which is associated with the colonial times), microstates are aware

III? Indo-Pacific Theatre on the Russian website of Geopolitica.ru: <https://www.geopolitica.ru/en/article/world-war-iii-indo-pacific-theatre> Access on: 18.08.2019.

⁵⁶ J. Greenert and J.M. Foggo, *Forging a Global Network of Navies*, in: S. Tangredi (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 38.

⁵⁷ G. Huffman 2018. *RIMPAC Builds Relationships; Relationships Make Strong Partners* available at the website of Navy Life: <http://navylive.dodlive.mil/2016/08/05/rimpac-builds-relationships-relationships-make-strong-partners> Access on: 18.08.2019.

⁵⁸ More on this: B. D. Rinard Hinga 2015. *Ring of Fire: An Encyclopedia of the Pacific Rim's Earthquakes, Tsunamis, and Volcanoes*, ABC-CLIO: Santa Barbara.

⁵⁹ G. Couturier, *What exactly is RIMPAC?* available at Navy Live: <http://navylive.dodlive.mil/2014/07/21/what-exactly-is-rimpac/> Access on: 18.08.2019.

of their difficult location, civilization and economic problems, and own “defencelessness” in the military understanding.

Hence, despite opposition to the US sphere of influence in the South Pacific⁶⁰, we can notice the unofficial consent of microstates to receive such assurance of security by the global sheriff. For having a close alliance with Europe (former metropolises), Asia (culturally different in values and running the business) or finally the USA, the newly created PICT prefer the latter one. It is the US that expands their seaports and airports, embeds American armed forces army in some of the Pacific islands, sends financial transfers that are a significant part of the annual national budgets, and ultimately strengthens own position among average islanders by creating the centres they need⁶¹.

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⁶⁰ Compare: P. Drysdale 1983. *The Proposal for an Organization for Pacific Trade and Development Revisited*, “Asian Survey” 23/12, p.1293-1304.

⁶¹ An example of such grass roots movements aimed at convincing the average inhabitants of Oceania about a friendly, but also necessary alliance with the US are, among others: American healthcare centres (por. J. Fitzpatrick – Nietschmann 1983. *Pacific Islanders – migration and health*, „The West Journal of Medicine” 139/6), the University of Guam and numerous colleges in Hawaii. They are the only universities in the North Pacific so many students from the southern Pacific Ocean choose them because of the prestige and perspective of American education instead of the nearest University of the South Pacific (USP) in Fiji. Finally, there is legal assistance provided by American legal foundations, like Pacific Legal Foundation (<https://pacificlegal.org/>) or Pacific Law Group (<http://www.paclawgroup.com/>).

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