

Original article. Historical science

UDC 327(9+470+571)

DOI: 10.31696/2072-8271-2023-3-2-59-032-039

Original article. Historical science

PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES AND THE GREATER EURASIA: COMMON INTERESTS IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD ORDER

Artyom A. GARIN¹

¹Institute of Oriental Studies RAS, Moscow, Russia,
a.garin@ivran.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4677-7221>

Abstract: Oceania is a group of countries and territories geographically scattered across the vast South Pacific. Nowadays, it has found itself in the vanguard of the transformation of the world order. Under the current conditions, Pacific Island Countries (PICs) are increasingly interested in diversifying ties in the international arena, in particular with the Greater Eurasia. However, it's possible that this will cause a negative reaction from Australia and the United States, which are used to keeping Oceania actors in their orbit. The article examines the main trends of the transformation of the world order, emphasizes the importance of cooperation between the countries of PICs and the Greater Eurasia, as well as suggests a number of areas of interaction where the interests of the parties coincide (security, combating climate change, economy, education, and traditional values).

Keywords: *Pacific Island Countries, Greater Eurasia, transformation of the world order, common interests, security, climate change, economy, education, traditional values*

For citation: Garin A.A. Pacific Island Countries and The Greater Eurasia: Common Interests in The Transformation of The World Order. *Yugo-Vostochnaya Aziya: aktual'nyye problemy razvitiya*, 2023, T. 3, № 2 (59). Pp. 32–39. DOI: 10.31696/2072-8271-2023-3-2-59-032-039

Научная статья. Исторические науки

ОКЕАНИЯ И БОЛЬШАЯ ЕВРАЗИЯ: ОБЩИЕ ИНТЕРЕСЫ В УСЛОВИЯХ ТРАНСФОРМАЦИИ МИРОПОРЯДКА

Артем Алексеевич Гарин¹

¹Институт востоковедения РАН, Москва, Россия
a.garin@ivran.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4677-7221>

Аннотация: Океания — группа стран и территорий, разбросанных по бескрайним просторам южной части Тихого океана. На современном этапе она оказалась в авангарде трансформации миропорядка. В сложившихся условиях малые развивающиеся островные государства все больше заинтересованы в диверсификации связей на международной арене, в частности, со странами Большой Евразии. Однако не исключено, что это вызовет негативную реакцию со стороны Австралии и США, которые привыкли держать океанийских акторов в своей орбите. В статье рассматриваются основные тенденции, характерные для трансформации миропорядка, подчеркивается важность сотрудничества между странами Большой Евразии и малыми развивающимися островными государствами, а также предлагается ряд областей взаимодействия, где совпадают интересы сторон (сфера безопасности, борьба с изменением климата, экономика, образование и отстаивание традиционных ценностей).

Ключевые слова: *Океания, Большая Евразия, трансформация миропорядка, общие интересы, безопасность, борьба с изменением климата, экономика, образование, традиционные ценности*

Для цитирования: *Гарин А.А.* Океания и Большая Евразия: общие интересы в условиях трансформации миропорядка // Юго-Восточная Азия: актуальные проблемы развития, 2023, Том 3, № 2 (59). С. 32–39. DOI: 10.31696/2072-8271-2023-3-2-59-032-039

Facing a New Reality: Pacific Island Countries and the Greater Eurasia in the Context of the World Order's Transformation

The transformation of the world order is characterized by actively changing geostrategic dynamics. Over the years, this process has received more and more new impulses, which have led to tectonic shifts in the international arena. A number of states are forced to respond to challenges and threats that have been emerging for many years. An example of this is the Russian Federation's (RF) response to eastward expansion of NATO. Other examples are the intention of developing countries to build closer relations with China, India, join the BRICS and reduce dependence on the United States.

Nowadays, the world is undergoing a reconfiguration of geopolitical alliances and interests. The echoes of the competition of major powers withdrawn in different parts of the globe is why middle and small actors are involved in the process of transforming the world order. The latter found themselves in a strategically twofold position. On the one hand, they're becoming the center of confrontation, risking being involved in conflicts; on

the other, — their voice is becoming louder in the international arena, the inflow of foreign aid and investment is growing.

The changing world order has made us to highlight the key role of regional institutions and cooperation mechanisms, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). But the United States and its partners are trying to artificially blur the status of such organizations, and, at the same time, create new alliances that are more convenient for themselves. For comparison, Russia opposes attempts to undermine "the regional system of multilateral security and development alliances on the basis of ASEAN, which rests upon the principles of consensus and equality of its participants."

It's no secret that the future of the world order depends on the Asia-Pacific. This makes it necessary to combine initiatives in which developing countries actively participate. As a result, the relevance of interaction within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the ASEAN and BRICS platforms, as well as the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is increasing. The latter consists five states (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia) and is "consistently asserting itself as one of the independent and self-sufficient centres of the emerging multipolar world"¹. The territory of the EAEU member states covers almost 14% of the earth's land area, and the total population is about 200 million people.

However, it should be noted that the strengthening of regional ties, Pacific Island Countries (PICs) are often overlooked. It's widely known that this sub-region of the Asia-Pacific has become a center of competition between the United States and China. Australia and other allies of the U.S. nervously perceived China's rising political, economic, and military influence. Washington and Canberra are trying to resist these processes, which has led to increase tension and strategic rivalry in Oceania.

Nowadays PICs are increasingly striving to diversify ties in the international arena in order to use new opportunities for development and take a worthy place in the multipolar world. An important element of this process may be the expansion of cooperation with the Greater Eurasia. It's important to understand that the continent unites almost all the leading powers of the world. Eurasia is home to India, China, ASEAN countries, Russia and even the European Union.

Except the EU, many Eurasian authors maintain friendly, equal relations, while having enormous weight on the world stage. Cooperation with them can have an extremely beneficial effect on the political positions of Oceanian countries and their economic development. As Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi rightly noted during the Forum for India-Pacific

Islands Cooperation (FIPIC): "We are ready to share our abilities and experiences with you without any hesitation -- be it digital technology or space technology, be it health security or food security, be it climate change or environmental protection. We are with you all the way"². Next a number of promising areas of interaction between Greater Eurasia and Oceania will be considered.

The Crucial Role of Security and Combating Climate Change

Security and the ability to resist neocolonial external influence have paramount importance for PICs, which have suffered for centuries from the hegemonic ambitions of Europe, Australia and the United States. Nowadays, Oceanian countries strive for stability and peace in the region, free from external pressure or coercion, but this cannot always be avoided in the context of geopolitical competition. As a result, partnerships that contribute to the protection of their interests are in demand among PICs.

A striking example of this was the establishment of diplomatic relations between Beijing, and Honiara, and Tarawa. Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare has repeatedly criticized Australia for trying to remove him from power and condemned Canberra's "maneuvers"³. Moreover, in November 2021, riots broke out on the territory of the country, which were preceded by the appearance of rumors about the conclusion of a defense agreement between the PRC and the Solomon Islands.

There was also a forcing of the situation around China's attempts to acquire "military bases" in Oceania, including Kiribati. Similar materials regularly appeared in the Australian and American media. To date, China still has no bases in Pacific Islands, but Canberra, Washington, and London have established AUKUS. Now, because of this alliance, nuclear-powered submarines may appear in the waters of the South Pacific.

Such conditions affect the PICs' foreign policy vision. At the present stage, they openly face geopolitical marginalization and an attempt to limit their influence in world affairs. It's no secret that the sub-region is witnessing increased attention from a number of powers that view it as a strategic arena for strengthening influence and protecting their interests. Australia and the U.S. do not hide that they consider the South Pacific a personal "buffer zone". Consequently, PICs have to face the delicate issue of balancing their security needs with the interests of larger actors.

Despite external pressure, the Pacific Island Countries are striving to increase their influence in international affairs. Interaction with many countries and regional associations will strengthen their positions in the changing world order. This may include cooperation in the fight against

non-traditional security threats (organized crime, illegal arms and drug trafficking, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, and supply chain disruptions). Due to the extensive PIC's exclusive economic zones (EEZ), the exchange of experience on ensuring the safety of their waters with the world's leading maritime powers (Russia, China and India) becomes especially relevant. Major maritime powers, like Moscow, Beijing and New Delhi, have common interests in maintaining peace, security and stability in the Asia Pacific.

We should also highlight the problem of climate change. PICs are suffering due to sea level rise and extreme weather events (cyclones, earthquakes, and tsunamis). They're extremely interested in promoting global actions in the field of combating climate change (which Russia, China, and India can help with their status in the international arena).

Of particular interest is the exchange of experience in the field of disaster prevention. Over the past 30 years, the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Russia (EMERCOM) has conducted more than 490 foreign humanitarian operations. It coordinates its efforts with colleagues from China, and India, who also make a significant contribution to countering the consequences of natural disasters. Humanitarian centers of the EMERCOM are successfully functioning in Serbia, Armenia, Cuba, Nicaragua, and their main task is to train foreign specialists in the field of protection of territories and population from emergencies with the involvement of Russian educational technologies, as well as responding to emergencies in relevant regions⁴.

Of course, it's impossible to ignore the significant contribution of Australian and New Zealand rescuers, who for many years have helped colleagues from PIC in the fight against the consequences of typhoons, floods and other natural disasters. However, the inclusion of Pacific Islands Countries in the dialogue mechanisms of such departments of the Greater Eurasia would have a beneficial effect on the skills development of local rescuers and contribute to the emergence of new international ties.

The Importance of Equal Economic and Educational Partnership in a Multipolar World

Economic and infrastructure development is another area of interest for Pacific Islands Countries. Oceanian actors aim to solve accumulated social and economic problems, including through the use of natural resource endowments and external assistance. In the period from 2008 to 2021, loans and grants in the amount of \$36.44 billion were provided to PICs⁵, but it's important to understand that diversification of trade relations

and higher business activity serve as a solid foundation for independent development. It's no secret that Pacific Islands Countries export seafood (for example, canned and fresh tuna), wood, mining products (including gold and copper), chocolate, vanilla, coffee, and cocoa. At the same time, the actors in the sub-region have not fully realized their enormous potential.

Cooperation with the Greater Eurasia in these processes can become a decisive factor for more sustainable PIC's economic growth. Thanks to cooperation with the world's leading actors, PICs will gain not only large sales markets but will also be able to become part of new supply chains and initiatives that contribute to making them more resilient to crises. According to the new Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, in the changing geostrategic landscape, the value of equal and mutually respectful cooperation is increasing, based on the adaptation of the world trade and monetary and financial systems to the realities of a multipolar world and reducing the opportunities of unfriendly states to abuse their monopoly or dominant position in certain areas of the global economy⁶.

Many Western studies claim that PICs are vulnerable, dependent on tourism, agriculture and fishing. However, this should not be presented as a "weakness", but as an opportunity for more intensive development of these industries. Considering that in many states of the subregion there are a huge number of promising young people with a thirst for obtaining valuable knowledge and professional skills, it's realistic to achieve these goals.

The transformation of the world order is closely intertwined with rapid technological progress (artificial intelligence, 5G, telecommunications). Given the solid Russian academic base, this educational direction may become extremely popular among PICs' students. Increasing the number of professional personnel is crucial for economic development, education, health care, and social progress.

However, it's possible that efforts to develop trade and economic ties with Pacific Island Countries may meet with a negative reaction from Australia, and the United States. For many years, Canberra and Washington have been building their own business networks in the sub-region, promoting loans from the IMF and creating comfortable conditions for their own entrepreneurs rather than a basis for the multi-vector development of Pacific Island Countries.

Traditional Values as a Mainstay in the Conditions of the World Order's Transformation

Among the advantages of PICs, it is impossible not to highlight their unique traditions and cultural heritage. The sub-regional countries support

traditional values, but face increasing foreign pressure and attempts by larger actors to erode the national values of sovereign peoples.

The preservation of cultural diversity and the protection of the rights of the Pacific Islands' population should play a decisive role in this situation. All this correlates with the new Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, which speaks of a commitment to strengthen traditional spiritual and moral values as a unifying principle for all mankind⁷.

Moreover, Russia and Pacific Islands have a long history of ties which is more than 200 years old. For two centuries, contacts between populations have been friendly, as evidenced by the diary entries of Russian circumnavigators⁸.

Another unifying factor — the harmonious coexistence of various peoples, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups on the same territory. The actors of the Greater Eurasia and Oceania were able to ensure the harmonious coexistence of various peoples, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups on their territory. Both sides are interested in preserving and popularizing cultural heritage, promoting educational exchanges, and tourism development to improve mutual understanding and strengthen relations.

* * *

The transformation of the world order creates a complex but dynamic landscape for Pacific Island Countries. Nowadays, PICs seek to strengthen their positions and diversify ties in the international arena, but larger actors who are used to keeping the South Pacific in their orbit do not always agree with this.

Nevertheless, the sub-regional countries are striving to determine their destiny, ensure that their voices are heard, and promote a prosperous and sustainable future for their people in the face of challenges and opportunities. Security; combating climate change; economic development; educational contacts; increasing political influence; and the preservation of culture — all these are among the main priorities of Pacific Island Countries.

Keeping a delicate balance, they strive for a partnership that respects their interests, promotes sustainable development, and allows them to assert their influence in the international arena. A unique opportunity in this situation is the development of ties between PICs and the Greater Eurasia. Including active involvement in the EAEU, the BRI, BRICS and other organizations or initiatives.

ИНФОРМАЦИЯ ОБ АВТОРЕ

ГАРИН Артем Алексеевич, кандидат исторических наук, научный сотрудник Центра Юго-Восточной Азии, Австралии и Океании ИВ РАН, Москва, Россия

Статья поступила в редакцию 15.05.2023;
одобрена после рецензирования 26.05.2023;
принята к публикации 31.05.2023.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Artyom A. GARIN, PhD (Hist.), Research Associate at the Center for Southeast Asia, Australia, and Oceania Studies, IOS RAS, Moscow, Russia

The article was submitted 15.05.2023;
approved 26.05.2023;
accepted to publication 31.05.2023.

¹ Meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council // President of Russia URL: <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/71204>

² India respects your priorities; proud to be your development partner: PM Modi to Pacific Island nations // The Economic Times URL:

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/india-respects-your-priorities-proud-to-be-your-development-partner-pm-modi-to-pacific-island-nations/articleshow/100410133.cms>

³ Dinnen, S. Dilemmas of intervention and the building of state and nation // Politics and State Building in Solomon Islands. ANU Press, 2008. P. 31.

⁴ Mezhdunarodnoe sotrudnichestvo (International Cooperation) // MCHS Rossii (EMERCOM) URL: <https://mchs.gov.ru/deyatelnost/mezhdunarodnoe-sotrudnichestvo>

⁵ Pacific Aid Map // Lowy Institute URL: <https://pacificaidmap.lowyinstitute.org/>

⁶ The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation // MFA Russia URL: https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/fundamental_documents/1860586/

⁷ The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation ...

⁸ Rossijskoe civilizacionnoe nasledie: russkie toponimy v yuzhnoj chasti Tihogo okeana: (Kollektivnaya monografiya) (collective monograph "Russian Civilizational Heritage: Russian Toponyms in the South Pacific") / Otv. red. i sost: E.M. Astaf'eva, S.E. Pale; In-t vostokovedeniya RAN. M.: IV RAN, 2021. S 117-138. ISBN 978-5-907543-01-0. 262 s. (Editors: E.M. Astafieva, S.E. Pale; Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 2021. 262 p.)