

Nichtmitgliedern frei zugänglich ist. Kontakt mit der Nachwuchsgruppe kann man unter [dga\\_nachwuchs@yahoo.de](mailto:dga_nachwuchs@yahoo.de) aufnehmen, weitere Informationen, inklusive Bilder der hier beschriebenen Tagung, finden sich unter: <http://www.asienkunde.de/nachwuchs/index.html>.

Stefan Rother, Anke Wiedemann

## **Asia and Oceania: Asian States compete for influence in the Pacific Island States**

Kassel, Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> 2007

This conference on the influence of Asian states in the Pacific Island States (PIS) attracted three dozen people with different backgrounds and from different disciplines. Among the lectures were sinologist Dr. Jens Damm from the FU Berlin, political scientist Dr. Roland Seib, historian Jochen Lohmann, and biologist Pavel Klinckhamers from the European Centre on Pacific Issues (ECSIEP) in Utrecht, Netherlands.

After a brief overview of the Pacific Network given by Marion Struck-Garbe, Jochen Lohmann explained the history of foreign interests in the Pacific. In this context he outlined Germany's colonial history in Oceania. He punctuated that it was less an economical or political matter for Germany to get involved in Oceania than a matter of national psychology. Unfortunately, he did not consider France and the UK as Pacific major players at the colonial era. In addition, it would have been interesting to hear more about the American influence in the Pacific after 1945 particularly with regard to the "strategic denial" of the Cold War.

Following Lohmann, Pavel Klinckhamers dealt with the overfishing in the Pacific. First of all, he explained the economical importance of fishing and of the exclusive economic zones for the PIS. In this context he emphasized the dangers of industrialized fishing for the maritime ecological system. 80 to 90% of the fish are caught by important economic powers like Japan. On the other hand only 4 to 6% of the profit set back to the PIS. Furthermore, industrial fishing has some other negative impacts on the PIS. Overfishing endangers the traditional subsistence fishery. Besides, the PIS are confronted with prostitution and AIDS coming from the trawlers crews. Yet, one of the biggest problems arises from the raged piracy and illegal fishery. Because of their limited capacities the PIS are not able to approach these problems. Even regional institutions like the Forum Fishery Agency or the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Institution do not have the resources to react and to control their territory.

In his lecture Dr. Roland Seib emphasized that it is not only because of maritime economical matters that the PIS are attractive to foreign powers. In this context Dr. Seib broached the issue of Asian NICs' interest in Oceanic natural resources like gold, nickel or timber. Especially China demands these goods. According to Dr. Seib, China has not political interests in the region. On the contrary, Beijing seeks to extend its economical interests in Oceania through donations or development aid. It is crucial to notice that while granting these, China does not ask for Good Governance. As an effect more and more dependence, ecological degradation, corruption, conflicts of distribution, and – as it is typical under such circumstances – "dutch diseases" will occur. Furthermore, because of the high amount of aid money it is to be expected that the existence of the weak island states in the Pacific was imperilled if this aid finished. Against the background of these facts it is not longer possible to consider the interests of the PIS and the Asian states as balanced.

After Dr. Seib's lecture on the economical aspects Dr. Damm stressed the political relation between the PIS and Asia or rather the relations between the PIS and both Chinese states. Dr. Damm started his lecture with a short historical compendium of the relation between China and Taiwan. In doing so, he presented invaluable information about the progressing marginalization of Taiwan in the past 40 years. Taipei has not been able to find partners for its "One-China-Policy". For this reason the small island states of the Pacific and the Caribbean became increasingly attractive for Taiwan. The Chinese island use chequebook diplomacy to get support. Nevertheless, it is better for the PIS to recognize China because it is possible to recognize China politically and Taiwan as a trading partner at the same time. Unfortunately, to do this vice versa is impossible. Dr. Damm then contradicted Dr. Seib by showing that there is a Chinese interest in Pacific security politics. Dr. Damm emphasized the so called Second Island Chain for the Chinese defence policy. This Second Island Chain covers parts of Micronesia and Melanesia. Besides, Dr. Damm explained the political effects of Chinese involvement in the PIS by using Fiji's last putsch as an example. In this context it was possible for Suva to outdo Australia with the help of Beijing. Dr. Damm concluded his lecture by giving some examples for the effects of the rivalry between Taiwan and China in Oceania. So far, China has invested more than 380 million US\$ in the PIS to reduce Taiwan's influence. The PIS get access to the Chinese market and to Chinese universities. It is clear for Taiwan that its marginalization will proceed. For this reason the PIS becomes even more important for Taipei, using the small Pacific states as its organ in international organizations like the UN.

Subsequent to Dr. Damm, Dr. Siegfried Zöllner gave a summary of Indonesia's influence in the Pacific region. He emphasized Indonesia's military self-assurance, which can be estimated as a sign for the conflict in West Papua as well as a cue to Australia. In this context Djakarta acts double tracked. Indonesia shows not only military power and firmness but also the wish to cooperate peacefully on an equal footings with the PIS. Especially this *equality* is very attractive for the PIS regarding Canberras increasing paternalism. As a conclusion of this meeting, it can be retained that Asia's influence in Oceania is controversial. The PIS can not exist without the economical support from Asia. On the other hand, the Asian involvement in the region has some effects which are certainly not desirable.

Andreas Holtz