

BORDER MANAGEMENT IN THE PACIFIC REGION

Michael Moriarty
School of Government
Victoria University of Wellington

Border management is difficult

- Defining the border is problematic
- Not all Pacific Islanders have accepted the legitimacy of current borders
- There are many stakeholders with diverse objectives
- Their objectives can conflict and/or work against each other

What do border interventions do?

- Some interventions enhance security but
- Others can impede access to assets, increase business costs, and add to personal and business risk
- They create some winners and some losers
- Countries try to maximise net benefits; but
- National interventions may be reducing overall regional welfare.

Risks and threats to FIC borders

- Transnational organized crime:
 - It is relatively new
 - It is serious
 - It attacks good governance via corruption and undermining the state's finances.
- Vulnerability to terrorism
- Risks to public health
- Bio-security risks
- Threats to revenue collection
- Hidden costs of poor trade and travel facilitation.

The international response to the risk of terrorism

- UN Security Council Resolutions that are mandatory for all member countries
- Advice from UN specialised agencies (IMO, ICAO, WCO) that it would be very costly to ignore
- Even more sophisticated initiatives by the US and others to protect the supply chain

The resulting problems facing FICs

- Legislative overload
- Pressure on agency budgets
- Need to increase staff skills – especially for biosecurity
- Consequently, FIC agency capabilities are limited
- It is uneconomic to provide trade and conformance services in FICs
- Assistance provided by donors is crucial but with better coordination it could be more effective

A regional approach to border management would be better

BUT

Can you have a regional approach to border management in the absence of a regional government?

Components of a regional approach

- Strengthening existing regional institutions
- Harmonising laws, rules and policies so as to make standards the same in all countries;
- Jointly producing border management services (such as regional training programmes); and/or
- The direct provision of services by individual countries on behalf of the whole region (e.g. air surveillance of fisheries).

Pros and cons of closer collaboration within the region

Advantages:

- Makes regulation more effective (fewer inter-jurisdictional leakages) and hence more secure;
- Easier to achieve critical mass in R & D and to attain economies of scale in service provision;
- Cost savings for governments, traders and travellers;

Disadvantages:

- Reduces freedom to act independently; and
- Possibly some loss of revenue.

But can FICs agree upon the objectives of border management policies: this could be contentious

For example:

- Will border policies support each country's industrial policy and labour market policies?

or

- Will border policies support a strategy of regional global integration?

FICs have a problem with the strategy of global integration

- They have no realistic alternative, but
- Global value chains create greater benefits for metropolitan countries than for FICs
- This will be considered unfair unless regional policies provide a countervailing advantage to FICs via reasonable opportunities for migration (hence facilitating ongoing remittance flows)

Conclusions

- Border management has become a lot harder
- FIC border agencies need a lot of help
- Bilateral assistance is helping to meet the most pressing problems of the moment
- In the longer term an explicitly regional approach might be better
- But this is unlikely to occur unless there is a greater sense of regional cohesion
- Regional cohesion can only be attained by policies that increase fairness and enlarge the payoffs to cooperation

Conclusions (cont)

- It would be helpful if metropolitan countries recognised that allowing migration from FICs is an essential component of the development model they are urging FICs to adopt
- For their part, FICs must continue to accommodate global concerns about terrorism and the security of global value chains
- FICs will need help with tax reforms
- “Top-down” anti-corruption policies need to be supplemented by “bottom-up” policies that increase generalised trust
- Domestic income distribution is a key factor in this process