


Security  **In Oceania**
In the 21st Century

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The Oxymoron of Security Forces in Island States

By Vijay Naidu

Introduction

In the report of the conference on Island State Security 22-24 June, 1999, several island security - related problems were identified: these included possible cross border conflict between the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea and Indonesia and Papua New Guinea; intra-state ethnic conflicts; poverty and social inequality giving rise to internal conflicts; land and resource use - related conflicts; money laundering; and the use of the islands as staging posts for international drug trade. Economic hardship for the region was envisaged with the loss of preferential access to markets. Mention was also made to environmental vulnerability particularly from rising sea levels.¹ These problems continue to dog the region. The last two years have seen two coups, a significant increase in drug trafficking through Fiji, HIV/AIDS has become a real danger and people smuggling has emerged in Oceania.

These security issues are products of both internal and external factors with each issue reflecting particular combination of endogenous and exogenous forces. Thus ethnic conflicts may be largely the consequences of internal factors but competition over resources and in the labour market is likely to be triggered by the state of the economy which is dependent on external factors as well. Externally imposed structural adjustment programs (SAPs) have also contributed to internal unrest. Drug and people smuggling have largely external origins but the lack of capacity in island immigration, custom and police authorities make the islands vulnerable targets. However, inter-state relations and external military threats certainly do not constitute a security issue for much of the region. This paper addresses what are considered to be four priority security concerns in the island states. These are: first, the crisis of leadership in island states; second, the widening of the gap between rich and poor; third, the threats posed to island state security by their security forces; and fourth, the use of the islands by drug

¹ Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, *Pacific Island Perspectives on Security*, Report on the Conference on Island State Security, 22-24 June, 1999, Honolulu. URL: http://www.apcss.org/Publications/Report_Island_State_Security.html.

cartels as transit points in the smuggling of drugs.

Crisis of leadership and political instability

Throughout the region islanders have increasingly become skeptical and even cynical about their leaders. There has been a "loss of innocence" from unre-served loyalty and respect for national political leaders in the immediate aftermath of independence to the current lack of trust of virtually all politicians. This phenomenon may be global but the machinery to check excesses of the politically powerful do not work very well in the islands. There appears to be an acceptance of the widespread practice of using political power for personal gains and establishing systems of patronage. Clean government is a rarity in Oceania. On the other hand, abuse of public office and misuse of public funds appear to be increasing.

In Fiji F\$220 million was fraudulently taken by prominent citizens, a list of the country's 'who's who' in the early to mid-1990s but to date not a single person has been successfully prosecuted. A number of the protagonists connected with the Sandline affair in Papua New Guinea have emerged largely unscathed from the multimillion dollar scandal. Vanuatu has had several instances of fraud and abuse of office by political leaders and public servants. Some of the characters involved in one scandal also appear in other publicly exposed scandals. After the US\$ 100,000, letter of credit scandal and the illegal use of pension funds, the latest financial fraud was the appointment of Vanuatu's roving ambassador, a con-artist who ingratiated himself with the exchange of an over valued gem stone to the recently displaced Prime Minister. The Samoan Auditor General was sacked for exposing numerous instances of the misuse of public funds by government officials.² Scams involving foreign fraudsters and Cook Island senior-most officials have been revealed in the past.

Attempts to seek accountability from public officials have been met by several tactics to obfuscate, evade and counter such efforts. The media in general and the print media in particular are closely monitored. They are either strictly

² N. Nath and G. Chand, "Smallness, Backwardness and Public Accountability: Public Sector Audit in Fiji and Western Samoa," Paper presented at Islands V Conference: Small Islands in the Third Millennium—Problems and Prospects of Island Living, Small Islands Studies Association, Mauritius, 1998.

controlled through ownership and/or regulations and licensing. Periodically governments warn the media "to be responsible", threaten the imposition of draconian legislation and either take away their license or threaten to do so. In Tonga journalists were imprisoned for their exposés of suspected corruption by public officials.

In Vanuatu, political leaders have mobilized their ethnic communities to oppose efforts to redress their wrong-doing. Elsewhere in Fiji, Tonga and Samoa, such efforts have been labeled as disrespectful of persons of high rank. Thus queries about the multi-million dollar passport scams in Samoa and Tonga have been effectively evaded. Those who have sought to question the unconstitutional decisions of Presidents of Fiji, all high ranking chiefs, through the legal system have been criticized, intimidated and assaulted for their disrespect for and insult to persons of rank. Rhetoric about the need for the respect of 'culture', 'Kastom', and tradition is common amongst those in authority. In Fiji, ethnicity is a most useful instrument to "muddy the water" when it comes to accountability. The National Bank of Fiji (NBF) fiasco, which cost the country around F\$500 million, when initially made public, was denied. As the pressure built up the then Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, both ethnic Fijian men decried those who sought accountability claiming that questions were being raised only because indigenous persons had been involved. The Minister of Finance declared that the NBF debacle was "water under the bridge" and instead of preoccupying the country in unravelling the mess, Fiji should move on.

Amongst the main supporters of George Speight's attempted coup and the doctrine of ethnic Fijian supremacy are some of the very people who borrowed millions of dollars from NBF, with no real intention of paying the loan back. A number of the ministers in the "caretaker" government in Fiji instituted in July 2000 were NBF bad debtors.

The nexus between business and politics is a complex and problematic matter. Powerful business interests can determine the electoral future of political parties and government. In the Fijian case, there are strong allegations and circumstantial evidence which indicate individual and corporate interests behind extra legal activities that have led to the overthrow of democratically elected government. In short, many island leaders have failed to be accountable and have not edu-

cated their people about human rights, equality of citizenship, access to state resources and other opportunities. Instead, they have tended to fill their own pockets, abused public office and mobilized supporters to oppose accountability on the basis of their hereditary rank and along ethnic lines.

In Pacific island countries (PICs), leadership has become a security issue in the context of poor management and even abuse of state-owned resources as well as other national resources in the midst of stagnant economies, increasing populations, changing aspirations and increasing inequality. When the impacts of globalization, the loss of preferential market and the demands for deregulation and reform by multilateral institutions are added to these, leadership at the national level is an immense problem for the islands. Riots, rebellions, separatist and civil wars and extra-legal overthrow of democratically elected governments are symptomatic of the ascendance of venal leaders in island states.

The widening gap between rich and poor

From relative economic equality there has been in the last three decades a significant increase in wealth and income differentials among islanders.³ Five broad socio-economic categories of islanders can be discerned. At the apex of island societies is a political and bureaucratic elite accompanied by senior members of the church clergy. At the second rung, and in Fiji, perhaps a parallel rung, is a class of managers of multi-national enterprises and big private entrepreneurs, including the larger commercial farmers. A middle class of professionals, middle level public servants and small business people follow in the third rung. Below them are a category of larger small holder farmers, small business people and a category of skilled wage earners. In the fourth tier are to be found smaller semi-substance small-holder and fishers and low paid workers. At the bottom of the heap is an assortment of casual labourers, seasonal farm-hands, unemployed persons especially the youth, the street people and other destitutes. The unemployed include a large category of out of school youth who are often alienated from rural village life styles but do not have the skills and means to gain a livelihood in town and cities. For the region as a whole it is

³ Epeli Hau'ofa, "The New South Pacific: Integration and Independence," in A. Hooper et al., eds., *Class and Culture in the South Pacific*, Auckland and Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific and Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Auckland, 1987, and "Our Sea of Islands," in E. Waddell, V. Naidu, and E. Hau'ofa, eds., *A New Oceania*, Suva: School of Social and Economic Development, University of the South Pacific, 1993.

estimated that in 1991 there were only 370,000 wage-earning job opportunities in an economically active population of 1.8 million.⁴ Structurally this situation has not changed in the last ten years. Unemployed young males are likely to engage in anti-social activities. These young adults have been most active in the instability in the Solomon Islands and Fiji. They become the foot-soldiers in situations of political turmoil.

Income distribution in PICs is very skewed in favour of a small minority. National Development programmes instead of fostering the explicit objective of growth with distribution have resulted in increased inequality amongst people, between regions of the country and between people of different ethnicity. In many PICs the top 20 percent of income earners received 50 percent of the income. In Honiara, Solomon Islands, 70 percent of the total income of all households accrued to less than 2 percent of the population.⁵ In Fiji official estimates of poverty indicate 25 percent of households falling below the poverty line and a further 15 percent being vulnerable to poverty. These figures have been based on a household income and expenditure survey conducted in 1991.⁶ They do not take into account regressive indirect taxation, inflation and the effects of the current political instability. However, they do provide an idea of the structural inequality prevalent in the country. To underline this point, the average weekly income in the highest 10 percent group in 1991 was F\$760 per week, more than twenty times that of the lowest 10 percent group earning an average of F\$34 a week.⁷ Figure 1, on the next page, shows the skewed income distribution in Fiji.

While poverty knows no ethnic barriers and it affects both the two large ethnic categories equally, it is more intense among Indo-Fijians. However, ethnic Fijians have lagged behind in education, in the professions and in business. This ethnic disparity fuels resentment and stereotyping which ethno-nationalists incite to their advantage.⁸

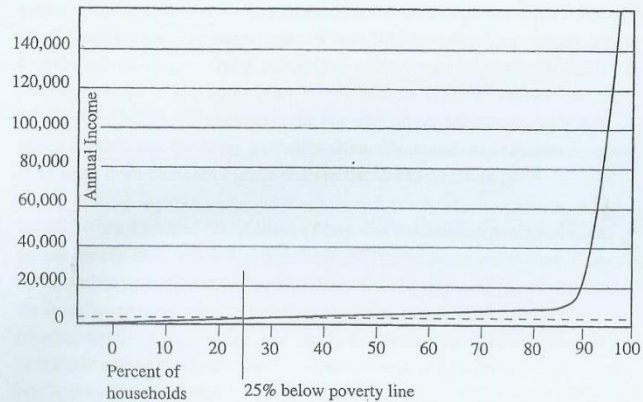
⁵ Ibid, p. 20.

⁶ Government of Fiji and UNDP, *Fiji Poverty Report*, 1997, Suva.

⁷ Ibid, p. 17.

⁸ S. Tarte and T.T. Kabutaulaka, "Rethinking Security in the South Pacific: Fiji and the Solomon Islands," in B. Vaughn, ed., *The Unraveling of Island Asia*, 2002, Praeger, CT.

Figure 1: Income Distribution in Fiji



Source: Government of Fiji and UNDP 1997, p.39.

In the 2000 coup and political instability ethnic Fijians from depressed rural areas who have been the 'victims of development' were aroused by ethno-nationalists to gather in large numbers in the Parliamentary Complex. They also invaded many Indo-Fijian farms and tourist resorts and held the owners and their families hostage. In Suva and some rural localities, looting, thefts and damage to property were accompanied by violence against Indo-Fijians. Sexual assaults and gang rapes were also reported.⁹ This spree of lawlessness was orchestrated and condoned by the rebel camp which was led by prominent chiefs. For much of the time the security forces stood by, failing to secure the safety of people and their property.

For the last three decades, emigration has been amongst other things a safety valve for island countries. The economic downturn in receiving countries and changes in their immigration policies in favour of skilled and business migrants have meant the restricting and even shutting down of migration opportunities. This has serious implications for social stability in some of the migration dependant states.

⁹ Personal communication, Coordinator of Fiji Women's Crisis Centre

Security forces

In the context of growing socio-economic inequality in island states and a scarcity of opportunities - "the poverty of opportunities" - there are degrees of popular discontent that island police and military forces are supposed to keep in check. However, the term security forces in island states is an oxymoron as these police and military forces have become major sources of destabilization and insecurity.

Fiji, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands are independent Pacific states that have armed security forces. The first three countries have standing armies as against armed police. With the exception of the 200 strong Tongan army, all the other security forces have in the last two decades become the major sources of insecurity and instability in the islands. Poor leadership, the lack of professionalism, unsatisfactory terms and conditions of employment in the lowest ranks coupled with kinship and ethnic affinities with factions of the bureaucratic and political elite have led to this disastrous state of affairs.

The Republic of Fiji Military Force (previously Royal Fiji Military Force) has had a good reputation from its engagement during the Pacific phase of the Second World War, in the Malaysian insurgency and for peace keeping in Lebanon and Sinai. It has been involved in UN peacekeeping since 1978. Because of this role, it is very well trained and equipped with sophisticated small arms.

Beyond this international work which earns the country foreign exchange revenues, there is no external threat to justify a standing army of more than 4000. Attached to the military is a small naval division responsible for surveillance and rescue duties in Fiji's EEZ. The Fiji army has had a history of internal interventions.¹⁰ Since the military coup d'état of 1987, the military has made explicit its desire to be the guarantor of internal security.

However, having stability and security in Fiji is dependent on maintaining the established ethnic Fijian status quo. As in Samoa and Tonga, in Fiji "through

¹⁰ O. Wilkes and S. Ratuva, "Militarism in the Pacific and the Case of Fiji," in D. Robie, eds., *Tu Galala: Social Change in the Pacific*, Annandale: Pluto Press, 1992, and S. Durutalo, *Internal Colonialism and Unequal Regional Development: The Case of Western Viti Levu*, MA Thesis, School of Social and Economic Development, University of the South Pacific, Suva, 1985.

their occupation of strategic political positions they (chiefs) are often at the centre of national power."¹¹ In Fiji, the first and second Governor Generals and the first and second Presidents from 1970 to 2000 have been high chiefs. The first Prime Minister who ruled till 1987 as a democratically elected leader was a paramount chief. This class of chiefs constitute the apex "of a system of interlocking family connections in the top echelons of the government [and] public service, and the Army guarantees Ratu dominance and protects it against challenges from dissident Fijians or from the Indian community."¹²

In 1977 when the chief-led Alliance Party was defeated by the Indo-Fijian farmer backed National Federation Party (NFP), the perceived threats of revolts by the military and public service, resulted in an undemocratic intervention of the then Governor General, a paramount chief to return the defeated Prime Minister to power. This action was legally justified as the 1970 constitution provided reserved powers to the Governor General to appoint the person who in his "deliberate judgement" had the support of a majority of members of Parliament. What transpired, however provided an initial snapshot of possible difficulties in changing governments through electoral democracy.

The military clearly showed its hand in May 1987 in the first military coup d'état in the Pacific in the twentieth century. This extra-legal military intervention followed in the wake of the defeat of the chief-led Alliance Party by a coalition of Fiji Labour Party (FLP) and the National Federation Party. An intriguing element of the coup was that a little known Lieutenant Colonel who was not a chief displaced his commanding officer, a chief but ultimately reinforced the established order. The second military coup of 1987 was designed to bring back the military strong man in the political centre stage together with his racist ethno-nationalist supporters. However the ethno-nationalists were unable to form an effective government. Yet again the defeated Alliance leader and many of his former cabinet ministers were returned to power.¹³

¹¹ R.G. Ward and A. Proctor, eds., *South Pacific Agriculture, Choices and Constraints*, Manila and Canberra: Asian Development Bank and Australian National University, 1980. See also S. Lawson, *Tradition versus Democracy in the South Pacific*, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

¹² J. B. Dalton, "Fiji—Independence and After," *Australian Neighbours*, Fourth Series (September-December), 1970, p. 8.

¹³ R.T. Robertson and A. Tamanisau 1988, *Fiji's Shattered Coups*, Pluto Press, Reichardt, Australia.

After being in the political and economic doldrums for a decade, a new constitution was unanimously adopted in 1997 by the Fijian Parliament and endorsed by the exclusively ethnic Fijian Great Council of Chiefs. This constitution in the tradition of the 1970 and 1990 constitutions entrenches ethnic Fijian institutions and safeguards their ownership and control over customary owned land and terrestrial and marine resources. It also allows for targeted and time bound affirmative action policies for ethnic Fijian and other disadvantaged groups. The 'compact' of the constitution directs all communities in Fiji to work together and that in case of disagreement over policy matters, ethnic Fijian interest would take precedence over those of other communities. While the 1997 Constitution continued to be racial, it was a significantly improved document compared to the decreed 1990 Constitution.¹⁴

Under its electoral provisions the Fiji Labour Party (FLP) and its coalition partners the Fijian Association Party (FAP) and the Party of National Unity (PANU) won a landslide victory. The *Veitokoni Lewenivanua* Party (VLY) joined the Peoples Coalition. Sitiveni Rabuka who had been Prime Minister since 1992 was defeated and blamed the loss of his party and its coalition partners on the rejection by all races of the 1997 Constitution. The fact of the matter was that there were several reasons for the defeat of the *Sogosoqo Vakavulewa ni Taukei* (SVT), National Federation Party (NFP) and United General Party (UGP) coalition. These included mismanagement of public funds, scandals over the indiscretions of public officers, the collapse of NBF, increase in poverty and unemployment, devaluation of the currency and the introduction of the value added tax (VAT).

The FLP leader, an Indo-Fijian, Mahendra Pal Chaudry was sworn as Prime Minister and he appointed, a multi-ethnic cabinet in which ethnic-Fijians were a majority. The People's Coalition Government ruled for a year making a number of policy decisions designed to improve the quality of life of the broad masses of the country. These included the exemption of the value added tax (VAT), an indirect sales tax on a number of food items and increase in poverty reduction funds. Chaudry also made strategic errors of judgement which alienated powerful elements in Fiji society. He sought to push the Land Use Commission

¹⁴ B. V. Lal, *Another Way: The Politics of Constitutional Reform in Post-Coup Fiji*, Canberra: Asia Pacific Press, 1998, W. Sutherland, *Beyond the Politics of Race, Political and Social Change*, Monograph 15, Canberra: Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1992.

when advised not to, he removed influential individuals from government boards and statutory bodies and he attempted to compel businessmen who had evaded taxes for years to pay up. His erstwhile political partner and a person renowned in the country for his demagoguery, Apisai Tora reactivated the *Taukei* movement and organized demonstrations in Lautoka and Suva. The government was confident that the movement did not enjoy the support of most ethnic Fijians and any civil unrest by the minority could be contained by the security forces.

What the government failed to realize was that it could not rely on the loyalty of the leadership of the police and the military. After the 1987 coups, Rabuka had established the Counter Revolutionary Warfare Unit (CRW) also known as the Meridian Force, largely manned by soldiers from his home province as an army within the army, loyal to himself. While Tora and his *Taukei* supporters were permitted to march (by Chaudry himself against the advice of the Minister of Home Affairs, as he believed in freedom of expression) through the capital city on the fateful day of 19 May, 2000, another group of tightly knit conspirators (George Speight and 7 CRW soldiers) took advantage of the distraction provided to invade the Parliament and hold captive 40 members of the government side.

During the first week of this armed take over of the National Parliament, CRW personnel had direct communication with the military headquarters, freely transported arms and ammunition and went back to the Queen Elizabeth Barracks (QEB) to change and have meals. It was evident that a significant number of military officers supported this expression of political extremism and terrorism. The security forces failed to prevent the assembly of coup supporters in the Parliamentary complex who formed a human shield against any attempt by soldiers loyal to government to rescue the hostages. During the 56 days of being held hostage at gunpoint, the Prime Minister and his son were assaulted. All the hostages were subjected to inhuman treatment.¹⁵

The Great Council of Chiefs prevaricated and allowed the hostage takers to not only consolidate themselves but also infiltrate the Council itself. With the military intervention of 29 May 2000 the coup was completed. The President was forced to step down and the military commander declared that the 1997

¹⁵ *Fiji Times*, 2000, 27 May, p. 2. *The Review*, 2000, August, p. 43.

Constitution had been abrogated. Unlike the 1987 coup when the military saw itself ruling Fiji for 15 years, this time around the military quickly relinquished power to a civilian government that it appointed. The civilian government's composition was almost exclusively ethnic Fijian, the token Indo-Fijian person, a junior Minister had no mandate from Indo-Fijians. This was the second time in less than a decade and a half that non-ethnic Fijian citizens have been disenfranchised and left unrepresented in government. In fact because the government was primarily made up of unelected persons disenfranchisement extended to all Fiji citizens. However it appeared that most ethnic Fijians were satisfied with the presence of unelected personnel of their ethnicity in government.

Ratu Mara, the President and high chief from eastern Viti Levu was deposed and replaced by Ratu Josefa Iloilo, the Tui Vuda, a high chief from western Viti Levu. It is evident from what has transpired thus far that a faction of the Kubuna Confederacy led by the chiefly Cakobau family backed the coup makers. Elements of the military which owed allegiance to the Cakobaus as well as other players including the Commissioner of Police, Rabuka and surprisingly, the President's own son-in-law, the former commander of the military apparently pressured the current military commander to remove Ratu Mara.

A subsequent mutiny in November 2000 in the QEB saw CRW elements attempting to take over the military HQ. Some reports alleged that the military commander was to be killed and replaced by Rabuka. In the shoot out at the barracks followed by incidents of torture and extra legal killings in the wake of the mutiny, the military death toll increased to 9. Altogether 16 deaths including that of two policemen have been attributed to the hostage taking and lawlessness that accompanied the May 2000 coup.

At the time of the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies' Island Security Conference in June, 2001 an illegal military backed caretaker regime wielded political power in Fiji. There was a legal challenge to the President's decision to appoint this government against the ruling of the Court of Appeal. At the same time, the regime decided to hold a general election in August, 2001. The military indicated that a victory for FLP will pose serious security risks, meaning that such an outcome is not acceptable to it.

Facade of democracy exposed

It is evident that a well-entrenched ethnic Fijian bureaucratic and political elite is secured by a predominantly ethnic Fijian military led by officers connected to the chiefly hierarchy so that democratic electoral outcomes which favour the opposition are in jeopardy. Both the ethnic Fijian bureaucratic and political class as well as the military use ethnic appeals to ensure that dissident ethnic Fijians do not obtain the support of commoner Fijians. In this they are assisted by the Methodist Church hierarchy. Businessmen dependent on privileged treatment by government such as sub-contracts, supply of equipment and materials, special concessions and consultancies tend to support the established governing status-quo.

The ethnic Fijian establishment's attitude to other ethnic categories in Fiji, and particularly to Indo-Fijians is that in all things 'political' the indigenous views and interests must prevail. Thus for them differential citizenship rights are quite acceptable. This is articulated succinctly by Ravuvu in his interpretation of 'vulagi' or visitor.¹⁶ As guests the latter are supposed to work hard and provision the hosts without question and not to get too uppity because the hosts will show them the door! This is a gross distortion of how a guest is to be treated in the norms of Fiji's indigenous cultures unless there is some subterfuge associated with the *vulagi*.

After five generations in Fiji, Indo-Fijians who constitute 44 per cent of the population do not enjoy fundamental citizenship rights.¹⁷ They own less than 5 per cent of the land. Since 1997 sugar cane farmers, 80 percent of whom are Indo-Fijians have been systematically evicted from their farms, without compensation and without any serious efforts by the state to find alternative livelihoods for them. The Fijian State also systematically discriminates against them in scholarships for education, in employment and promotion as well as in the allocation of commercial loans. There is great disparity in the public service between the proportion of ethnic Fijian employees and Indo-Fijian employees. This disparity increases at the senior levels with more than 80 per cent of permanent secretaries and directors being ethnic Fijian and Rotuman.

The Fiji military is almost exclusively ethnic Fijian (see figure 2). It has a

¹⁶ A. Ravuvu, *A Façade of Democracy*, Suva: Reader Publishing House, 1991.

¹⁷ V. Naidu, "Democracy and Governance in the South Pacific," in E. Vasta, ed., *Citizenship, Community and Democracy*, London: Macmillan, 2000.

recruitment policy and procedures that have effectively kept non-ethnic Fijians out. Indo-Fijians who have had difficulty in entering the Fiji army have become soldiers in the rim-country armies. The Fiji military obviously has extremely capable and professional soldiers and officers including the former head of the Third Infantry Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Seruvakula who refused to support the George Speight coup and who prevented the take over of QEB in November, 2000.¹⁸ However the same military also harbours racists, mutineers and insurgents as well as persons who have engaged in extra-legal torture and killing.

The security forces in Fiji have been ethnicised and politicized especially since 1987. As in the case of Haiti, no elected government is safe from possible coups. This is particularly so when the elected government is left of centre and is supported by Indo-Fijian voters. Fiji's experience has shown that it is harmful for stability and security to have a standing army comprising of one ethnicity in a multiethnic society. It is unwise and morally reprehensible that such a military receives support from the United Nations and countries that advocate and practice democracy and multiculturalism.

In this regard there is very little prospect for long term democracy in Fiji and by extension the respect for human rights. The social fabric of Fiji society has been unraveled yet again and each time this happens, it is more difficult to return to what the military has referred to as normalcy. The flight of capital and skilled human capital is of such a magnitude that long term progress has been severely undermined.¹⁹ This will invariably

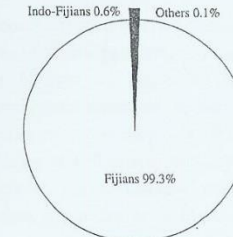


Figure 2: Ethnic Composition, Fiji Armed Forces

Source: Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 1996

¹⁸ Lieutenant Seruvakula in interviews with the Fiji media before he emigrated to New Zealand indicated that he left the Fiji army because many officers had compromised themselves during and after the hostage-taking and coup in May, 2000.

¹⁹ N.K. Chetty and S. Prasad, *Fiji's Emigration: An Examination of Contemporary Trends and Issues*, Demographic Report No. 4, Suva: UNFPA and University of the South Pacific, 1993. M. Mohanty, "Contemporary Emigration from Fiji: some trends and issues in the post-Independence era," in V. Naidu, E. Vasta, and C. Hawksley, eds., *Current Trends in South Pacific Migration*, Wollongong: Asia Pacific Migration Research Network, University of Wollongong, Australia, 2001.

blight the lives of young people, which in turn will contribute to social unrest. Ultimately and inevitably oppression, social exclusion and violence will beget violence.

Insecurity created by security forces in Melanesia

The Fiji experience amply manifests the danger presented by a standing peace time army to democratic institutions including an independent judiciary. Recent events in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands reflect the unruly nature of security forces in these countries. A rebellion in the military camp in Port Moresby in 2000 only subsided when the government agreed to relinquish its plan to reform the security forces. The Papua New Guinea military has been prone to indiscipline in its unsuccessful efforts to suppress the armed Bougainville independence movement. Numerous cases of brutal killings of unarmed civilians and the rape of women have sullied the image of the PNG military over the last decade. In the Solomon Islands, elements of the police force actually raided a divisional armoury to equip the Malaita Eagle Force. The MEF is made up of some of these police personnel. The MEF has since retaliated against the Isatabu Freedom Fighters and have overthrown the elected government of Bartholomew Ulafa'alo. The current regime in this country is backed by MEF. Extra legal activities and killings continue in the Solomon Islands in spite of the Townsville Peace Treaty.

Besides corruption in high places in Vanuatu, the Mobile Security and Police Force has made its uncalled for intrusion into stability and security. In October 1996, the President of the Republic and the Acting Prime Minister were abducted and held hostage at gunpoint by the Vanuatu Mobile Force (VMF). Anxious shuttle diplomacy helped to end this crisis. The reason behind this extreme action was frustration over the failure of the government to meet demands for a pay increase!²⁰

Drug transiting in the Islands

In the midst of the coups and the confusion caused by lawlessness in Suva, under cover agents from the United States and Australia were following the tracks of an international drug syndicate which was moving 300 kilograms of

heroin valued at F\$20 million via Fiji to Australia.²¹ This shipment was bound for the crowds gathered in Australia for the Olympic Games but was delayed. This was not the first discovery of outward-bound drugs in Fiji. It can be assumed that it will not be the last. For instance a family was reported to have found, F\$400,000 worth of cocaine in two locally manufactured biscuit tins in late April this year.²² Some of the cocaine is being sold within Fiji. There is already a thriving trade in marijuana.

Although police commissioners of Pacific Forum states meet periodically to address issues of common concern, it is evident that without exception island police forces are poorly trained, inadequately equipped and not well funded. It is not surprising therefore that they are not effectual (investigating, apprehending and successfully prosecuting) in police work and prone to corruption. These police forces do not have the capacity to tackle international criminal syndicates involved in drug and people smuggling as well as other illicit activities.

The Way Forward

The four security issues addressed in this paper, leadership, growing socio-economic disparities, security forces and drug smuggling are complex and difficult challenges. They can be tackled. Good leadership can be nurtured by inculcating values of responsibility and service to the wider community and through institutionalized checks and balances. In this regard watch-dog organizations and the media have proved to be powerful mechanisms to expose and control abuse of public office. The strengthening of civil society organizations which can provide the scope of leadership training as well as seek accountability of state institutions is another prong in fostering leadership. Limits to political party funding and scrutiny over the links between politicians and business interests need to be instituted.

With respect to the obvious difference in earning power and life chances among people in island states, it must be remembered they were previously non-market societies. Reciprocity and redistributive principles governed relationships within and between kinship groups. Those who were in positions to access wealth were especially obligated to share. A great many of the reciprocal and

²⁰ DeClotire, P. 1996 (November), Vanuatu's Coup.....the Melanesian Way", *Pacific Islands Monthly*, Fiji Times Limited Suva, pp. 45-46.

²¹ *Fiji Times*, 30 October, 2001.

²² *Fiji Times*, 27 April, 2001.

redistributive mechanisms continue to survive in island societies. At the national level very deliberate and targeted policies of affirmative action to build capacity among disadvantaged groups will assist in reducing the sense of alienation felt by such groups.

Structures and mechanisms including the ownership and control of resources which contribute to grossly differential incomes need to be reformed. Decentralized regional development that will help disperse economic activities and spread infrastructure must be central to government policy. In this regard the unfettered push to market-centred development, a central pillar of the globalization agenda together with the 'rolling back of the state' can undermine redistributive mechanisms.

With respect to security forces, the question that needs to be raised is whether island states that do not have external enemies should have armies. Maintaining a military force is a major expenditure on island state revenues. Funds used to bolster peace-time standing armies can be utilized more productively. This is especially so when such funds are scarce and when the military personnel become security threats!

The last security issue identified in this paper which involves island states as a part of networks to transship drugs can only be countered effectively through concentrated regional and international strategies. In this regard the training of island officials in customs, immigration and police departments is crucial as is the availability of suitable equipment. As official corruption is closely linked to drug rings, professionalism amongst these officials is also pivotal

Conclusion

The Pacific region, particularly island and archipelagic states have entered a phase of uncertainty and instability. Pre-existing natural and economic vulnerability has been exacerbated by global warming and globalization. Island states are also confronted with instability and insecurity emerging from poor leadership, the widening gap between the haves and have nots, their own security forces and international drug cartels.