

THE STATE AND THE NATION
A case study from the South Pacific

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INTRODUCTION

This paper begins with a general description of South Pacific states and societies and their relations with the outside world. It then turns to the specific case of Fiji, examining its multi-ethnic composition, the nature of the post-colonial state, and its present critical position with regards to both internal and external factors.

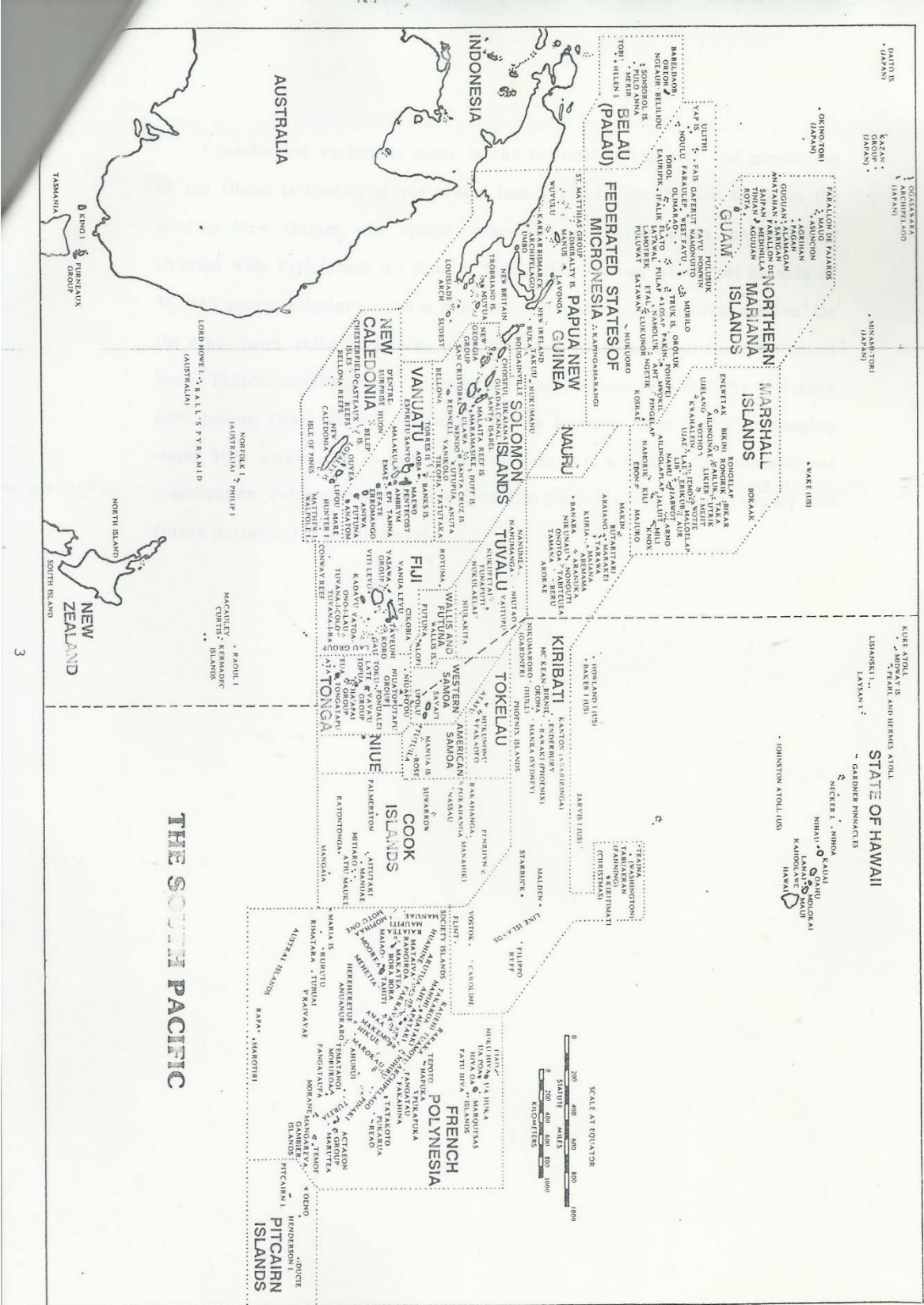
In built in this paper are four assumptions which need to be made explicit as they indicate the theoretical model of the state that informs the present discussion. First, the state comprises that body of institutions and personnel endowed with legitimate authority that acts as the interface between a recognized polity and the outside world which includes the United Nations system, foreign states and agencies. Second, the nature of the state is crucial for an understanding of both its internal dynamics and its external relations. Third, the nature of the state is defined by its ethnic and class

character, which in the case of most Pacific societies is a combination of dominant classes in the two modes of production - capitalist and semi-capitalist - found in them. Related to their ability to straddle two systems of economic, socio-political and cultural organization, the holders of state power are also transnational in their way of life, education, value-system and world views (Hau'ofa, 1987). Fourth, as nearly all other states in the Third World, South Pacific states are vulnerable to their economic position in the world economic system.

SOUTH PACIFIC STATES

Although the South Pacific region is rather large in terms of size, stretching from Latitudes 20 degrees North to 30 degrees South with Iran Jaya (West Papua) in the west and the Pitcairn Island in the east (see map), it is very small in terms of actual land area and total population. Some 60 million peoples inhabit the 30 different territories that comprise the 2 percent of the land area in this 30 million square kilometres of sea (SPC, 1978).

The region comprises ten politically independent or nationally self-governing countries. These are in order of achieving juridical autonomy - Western Samoa (1962), Cook Islands (1965 internal self-government only), Nauru (1968), Fiji (1970), Niue (1974, internal self-government), Papua New Guinea (1975), the Solomon Islands (1978), Tuvalu (1978), Kiribati (1979) and Vanuatu (1980). Non-independent territories remain colonial possessions of the United States, France, Indonesia, New Zealand, Australia and Britain.



Considerable variations occur in the political status, size and population of the island territories of the region (see Table 1). On the one hand, in the west is New Guinea; the second largest island in the world, on which is situated West Papua, and the state of Papua New Guinea which has an area of 461,680 square kilometres and a population of three and a quarter million. On the other hand, there is the tiny phosphate rich island of Nauru in the Central South Pacific covering only 22 square kilometres and inhabited by less than 8000 people. Other Pacific territories fall in between these two wide ranging states. It is noteworthy in this regard that there is a pattern in socio-political organization, cultural practices, resource distribution, extent of dependency and future potential for development.

Territory	Political Status	Area (sq km)	Population (1981)
New Guinea	Commonwealth of Independent States	461,680	3,400,000
Papua New Guinea	Commonwealth of Independent States	461,680	3,400,000
West Papua	Commonwealth of Independent States	461,680	3,400,000
Nauru	Commonwealth of Independent States	22	8,000
Other Pacific territories	Various	Various	Various

Source: United Nations Year Book, 1981, p. 208.

The island states of the Western South Pacific, namely the countries, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea, exemplify the relatively high level of economic development associated with high income per capita.

Also New Caledonia (France) which reports a similar production of Perse.

Table 1: Summary of Status, Size, Population and Density of South Pacific Territories

State or Country	Status	Land Area in sq km	Population	Density
American Samoa	Unincorporated US	197	33,200	157
Cook Islands	Self-governing in association with New Zealand	240	17,754	
Easter Islands	Colony of Chile	117	2,000	17
Fiji	Independent State			
		13,272	650,000	33
French Polynesia	Colony of France	4,000	160,000	42
Guam	Unincorp. US territory	549	106,000	161
Irian Jaya	Colony of Indonesia	410,000	1,037,740	3
Kiribati	Independent Republic	719	59,900	79
Kosrae	Federated States of Micronesia	110	5,491	45
Marshall Islands	Fed. State of Micronesia	171	30,873	173
Nauru	Independent Republic	23	8,400	333
New Caledonia	Colony of France	19,103	142,500	7
Niue	Self-gov. assoc. NZ	258	3,298	15
Northern Marianas	Fed. State of Micronesia	471	19,598	34
Palau	Fed. State of Micronesia	460	2,116	32
Papua New Guinea	Independent State	461,690	3,060,000	7
Pitcairn	Colony of Britain	4.5	53	14
Ponape	Fed. State of Micronesia	375	22,081	62
Solomon Islands	Independent State (Monarchy)	29,785	248,000	7
Tokelau	Colony of New Zealand	11	1,600	160
Tonga	Independent Kingdom	671	98,400	129
Truk	Fed. State of Micronesia	118	37,488	328
Tuvalu	Independent State	26	8,730	288
Vanuatu	Independent Republic	11,880	120,000	8
Wallis and Futuna	Colony of France	124	11,300	39
Western Samoa	Independent State	2,934	160,000	52

Density of Federated States of Micronesia is 70
Source: Pacific Islands Year Book, 1981, pp 9-10.

Thus the island states of the western South Pacific, namely the Solomons, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea¹ characterized by relatively egalitarian atomistic communities associated with Melanesian cultures are

¹ Also New Caledonia (Kanaky) which remains a colonial possession of France.

resource rich, less dependent and have much greater future potential for development than the states of northern and eastern Pacific. The latter, in Micronesia and Polynesia respectively, have centralized, hierarchically ranked political structures, are resource poor and extremely dependent and have rather bleak future development prospects. The International Law of the Sea and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) have helped in extending the sea boundaries of these states.

More generally, however, the political economies of island states reflect the following characteristics:

1. dependence on a single export product for 50 to 80 percent of domestic exports;
2. an economy dominated by one or two large companies;
3. average incomes are high (by Third World standard) but these conceal grave inequalities, with expatriate elements controlling principal economic activities;
4. there is growing urbanization, emigration and unemployment;
5. a large component of imports is made up of food, averaging 20% for the region;
6. manufactured goods, capital equipment and petroleum products comprise the bulk of incoming goods - they are producers of what they do not consume, and consumers of what they do not produce;
7. they are price takers rather than price makers (Young, Pacific Islands Monthly, August, 1980; and Australian Parliamentary Research Service, Background Brief on the South Pacific Region).

Generally, two major problems confront Pacific states, these are (a) the maintenance of political independence in the context of their very considerable economic dependence and (b) the maintenance of national integrity in the face of growing divisions of ethnicity in the context of uneven peripheral capitalist development. The first problem is particularly acute for Micronesian and Polynesian states which are resource poor and closely integrated into metropolitan economies. Recently, Watters (1987) coined a new word to describe a number of these particularly dependent societies. "MIRAB" denote societies that are dependent on "MI" - migrations, "R" - remittances, "A" - Aid, "B" - Bureaucracies". Watters and his colleagues maintain that the reality of economic dependence make island nations merely extensions of metropolitan economies.

The Pacific Basin Concept refers to cooperation amongst the large rim countries of the Pacific and it draws attention to the global shift in economic affairs. This concept, however, ignores the future position of the small Pacific states. The other problem for Pacific states is maintaining national integrity in the situation of divergent demands by constituent regions, ethnic categories and interest groups. This problem is more pressing for Melanesian states with their scores of different languages and cultural practices. In the Solomons, people speak 87 different languages, in Vanuatu, they speak more than 100 and in Papua New Guinea more than 700. The fact that only a few thousand people speak a language and are invariably located in particular regions that have been unevenly affected by capitalist development means that ethnicity can and does gain significance. Secessionist movements emerged in Papua New Guinea,

Solomons and Vanuatu threatening the very fabric of the emergent national states.

Ideologies such as "the Pacific Way" of consensus politics, the Melanesian Way, Melanesian Socialism, the Polynesian Way, the Micronesian Way, Fa'a Samoa, Faka Tonga and Vaka Viti have been created to cement the ties among citizens of Pacific states. These have met with mixed success. In many instances these ideologies have been used to manipulate and control the populace and are pragmatically modified to suit the needs of the holders of state power. But who are they?

Holders of state power include leading politicians (Ministers of the state) and policy-making senior bureaucrats. They work closely with dominant elements in the private sector. The latter, although not necessarily directly involved in the state apparatus have great influence over state-power holders. In the hierarchical chiefdoms of Polynesia, particularly Western Samoa and Tonga, chiefs (or aristocrats) have much influence as wielders of state power. They generally form a "class alliance" with dominant commercial interests—both local and foreign. In the Melanesian societies, at the absence of nationwide influential chiefly classes, a class of educated professionals have emerged to take control of the state. The struggle for state-power amongst the educated class can polarise the society concerned.

In both situations, holders of state power include the western educated and sophisticated elements of society. They speak English, have attended similar educational institutions, have common values and have a similar world

view which is pro-west and anti-Soviet. In the regional context, most of these states with Australia and New Zealand (Aotearoa) form the South Pacific Forum which is a body that crystallizes regional views about matters of regional and world concern. Australia and New Zealand are the dominant states in this organization as they dominate trade, aid and military assistance in the region. They can and do control foreign relations of Pacific states.² The Kiribati-Soviet fishing agreement and a similar proposed deal between Vanuatu and the USSR have caused much concern in Australia and New Zealand. Both these countries have strong trade and diplomatic ties with the USSR (with Australian trade with the USSR almost reaching the billion dollar mark).

It is noteworthy that attempts by Pacific states to establish creative foreign policy initiatives are smothered by Australia and New Zealand which act as proxies of the US. The growing militarization of the region and interference in national politics by foreign forces undermines national sovereignty.

Some of the problems of economic dependence and national unity are most acutely exhibited in the context of Fiji which lies on the borders of Polynesia and Melanesia and contains a sizeable proportion of citizens of Asian and European origins.

² Only Vanuatu is a member of the non-aligned movement. Its contact with Cuba in the early 1980s and with Libya in 1986-87 was widely condemned by Australia, New Zealand and the United States. These metropolitan countries with France and Holland formed the South Pacific Commission (SPC) in 1947 to coordinate their political and economic objectives in the region.

THE FIJI CASE STUDY

Fiji is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society of 715,375 inhabitants. Their ethnic breakdown is given in Table 2 and Table 3 lists the political ethnic categories recognized by the state.

Table 2 Fiji's Population by Ethnic Origin, 1986

		% of Total
Chinese	4,784	0.6
European	4,196	0.6
Fijian	329,305	46
Indian	348,704	48
Part European	18,297	2.5
Rotuman	8,652	1.1
Other Pacific Islanders	8,627	1.1
All Others	810	0.1
TOTAL	715,375	100

Table 3: Ethnic Categorization for Electoral Politics

	Total	%
"Fijians"		
Fijian/Rotuman and Other Pacific Islanders	346,584	48
"Indians"	348,704	48
"General Electors"		
Chinese/European/ Part European and and All Others	28,284	4

Source: Calculated from Report on Fiji Population Census 1986, Parliamentary Paper No. 4 of 1988, p. 39.

The nature of the state in Fiji and Fiji society at large can only be understood in a historical context. The history of Fiji is a history of colonial capitalism which was to suit Australian monopolistic capital and British

metropolitan state interests. From the narrow bilateral political connection with Britain and economic connection with Australia, the post-colonial state has diversified its links with numerous states both on a bilateral and multi-lateral basis. In order to understand these relations there is a need to examine the state in Fiji both historically and contemporarily.

Much of the structure and functions of the state in Fiji is the product of the antecedent colonial state and society. British colonialism lasted for ninety-six years during which time, the whole demographic and class basis of Fiji society was transformed. But this transformation occurred on the basis of preserving and reinforcing aspects of indigenous Ethnic Fijian societies. On the one hand Pacific Island labourers and particularly 60,500 Indian indentured labourers were brought in between 1879 and 1916 to work the sugar and coconut plantations of Fiji, thereby affecting the demography of the country.³ On the other hand the Ethnic Fijian population which declined from upwards of 150,000 to 87,000 by the second decade of this century, was compelled to live in nucleated villages under their chiefs. Their land rights over 83% of the land was coupled with communal ownership and communal labour supervised by chiefs who had rights to personal labour service or lala.

The colonial state in Fiji was an organ that reflected the class alliance of an European oligarchy (of plantation, milling and merchant interests), British colonial officials and Ethnic Fijian chiefs. The latter acted as agents of social control over the indigenous population. Between 1874 and 1920, Indians

³ Experiments with Japanese workers were unsuccessful because of high death rates.

and Indo-Fijians had no direct say in the colonial state.

While Indian migrants were immediately proletarianized under a system of forced labour, the Ethnic Fijians were only gradually incorporated as wage earners. The colonial state acted to prevent Ethnic Fijians from becoming workers, encouraging communal and seasonal labour on their part. European plantation and merchant interests demanded that more land and labour be released from the chiefly mode of production so that capitalist accumulation could be increased. Europeans also demanded and received a preponderant voice in the colonial state.⁴ Their agitation for democracy quickly dissipated in the second decade of the twentieth century when they realized that democracy denoted majority rule by blacks or coloureds. They then called for representation by nomination. This occurred as a response to increasing calls for equality of treatment by Indians and Indo-Fijians and by the mixed race population (Ali, 1980).

Throughout the colonial period, the British governor headed the colonial state in a system of autocratic and authoritarian rule. This system preserved European privileges on the basis of asserting the "paramountcy of Fijian interests" which meant Eastern Ethnic Fijian chiefly interests and discriminatory treatment for the majority population of Indo-Fijians, Ethnic Fijians and mixed race communities. Far from creating a democratic

⁴ In 1904 Europeans had 6 members in the Legislative Council representing 2,440 whites compared to only 2 for Ethnic Fijian chiefs out of 100; 22,790 Indian British subjects and 52,000 Ethnic Fijians were unrepresented (Ali, 1980, 131).

multiethnic nation out of the diverse people of colonial Fiji, the British rulers and their European and chiefly associates, administered through authoritarian dictates and followed a policy of divide and rule.⁵ A racial division of labour was engendered with Europeans occupying the top managerial and administrative positions, Indo-Fijians in sugar cane farming, Ethnic Fijians in villages, cultivating subsistence produce and making copra for export, and as goldminers and stevedores. Part-Europeans were in copra plantations and as skilled labourers in sugar mills and the Chinese were market gardeners and owners of the smaller commercial outlets. With the end of indenture and the arrival of Gujerati traders, Indo-Fijians increasingly entered commerce.

In the 1960s, the British were under increasing pressure to give Fiji independence. Moves in this direction were strongly opposed by Europeans and Fijian chiefs who felt that their privileges could be threatened by majority rule by Indo-Fijians who now outnumbered other ethnic categories. In July 1963 the United Nations Committee on Colonialism called for an end to British rule in Fiji. The "UN General Assembly demanded by 78 votes to nil (with 21 abstention) that Britain "take immediate steps to transfer all power to the people of Fiji" (Ali, 1980, 151). Since the 1930s, but especially between 1963 and 1969, the

[British] officials encouraged people to interact as representatives of racial groups. Official values emphasized the reality of racial divisions and the need to contain them. They deflected attention from another aspect of the social structure - inequalities of wealth, prestige and power that created distinctions between Europeans and

⁵ Strike actions by Indo Fijians in 1920, 1921, 1943, 1959 and 1960 were broken up by Ethnic Fijians. The leader of one major anti-colonial movement, Apolosi Ranawai, was deported for fear that blacks might work together.

non-Europeans and also among Fijians and Indians (Norton, 1977, 42; also see Mamak and Ali 1979).

At the outset state power was inherited by the Alliance Party which was essentially a coalition of Europeans, representing local and transnational corporate interests, Ethnic Fijian chiefs and aspirants and Indo-Fijian business interests. Formed in 1966, this party had three major constituent bodies - the Fijian Association, the General Electors Association and the Indian Alliance. While it served the narrow interests of capital and chiefs, the party's political support base was among Ethnic Fijians, Europeans, Part-Europeans and Chinese who all opposed the idea of "one man one vote" or common roll advocated by Indo-Fijian leaders.

The latter had formed the National Federation Party (NFP) in 1965 to struggle for cane farmers and workers who were by and large Indo-Fijians. These leaders sought equality with the other ethnic categories and opposed the system of communal or racial representatives considering it to be divisive. They made populist appeals on behalf of the "have nots" of colonial society and demanded an end to the privileges of the minority of whites and chiefs.

Since the 1965 Constitution the hegemonic position of Ethnic Fijian chiefs and Europeans was guaranteed. It gave Ethnic Fijians, who comprised 43% of the population 16 seats (14 elected and 2 from the Council of Chiefs), the Indo-Fijian 50% of the population were allocated 12 seats and the General Electors (Europeans, Chinese and Part-Europeans) who made up 7% of the population were given 10 seats or 28% of the elected 36 seats in the council.

This rather unequal distribution of seats was accompanied by the introduction of cross-voting seats which meant that each voter had four votes, besides his/her vote for his/her own communal candidate (9 Fijian, 9 Indian, 7 General Elector representatives), the voter also had 3 further votes for representatives of the other races.

In the election of 1966, the Alliance won 23 seats but two successful independents and the two Council of Chiefs members joined the Alliance which gave it 27 seats. The NFP took the 9 "Indian" communal seats. When the Alliance attempted to form a Council of Ministers in September 1967, the NFP walked out of the Legislative Council decriing the grossly inequitous 1965 Constitution. In the 1968 by-election for the 9 "Indian" communal seats, the NFP won by an increased majority of votes. The Alliance Party and in particular the Fijian Association members organized demonstration and threatened Indo-Fijians with violence and deportation.

From a position of strength the Alliance Party moved towards independence. The NFP temporarily shelved its call for common roll and supported Fiji's independence as a Dominion in the Commonwealth, hoping that ethnic issues would be resolved better without the British.

The 1970 Independence Constitution, however, established the basis for ethnic politics and preserved the hegemony of European capitalists and Ethnic Fijian chiefly interests. State-power was inherited by an oligarchy of these interests. To understand the problems of national integrity and national unity and the role of ethnicity, the nature of the post-colonial state has to be

unravelling. The 1970 Independence constitution provided the essential framework of state-power and political activities on the basis of ethnicity in Fiji.

It contained features which contributed to a divided nation where ethnicity became a central aspect of politics. First, it entrenched a communal electoral system; the 52 seat Lower House or Parliament had reserved seats for each of the three "politicised races" in Fiji. "Fijians" had 22 seats, "Indians" had 22 seats and "General Electors" had 8 seats.⁶ Twenty-seven seats were to be elected exclusively by each "race" and twenty-five seats through a system of cross voting. Each voter cast four votes. See Table 4 below for seat allocation by "race".

Table 4: Allocation of Seats in the Lower House in the 1970 Constitution

"Race"	Communal Seats	National Seats	Total %	Pop. (1986) %
Fijians	12	10	42.3	48
Indians	12	10	42.3	48
General Electors	3	5	15.4	4

Second, exclusively Ethnic Fijian institutions such as the Council of Chiefs, the Fijian Affairs Board, The Fijian Administration, the Native Land Trust Board and the Fijian Development Fund, were entrenched in the Constitution. Both Houses of Parliament needed to have 75% majority to change any of these. The Senate or Upper House had 8 Council of Chief members who had veto powers on these matters. See Table 5 below for

⁶ Many other ethnic categories exist in Fiji but they are not recognized by the state.

membership of Senate.

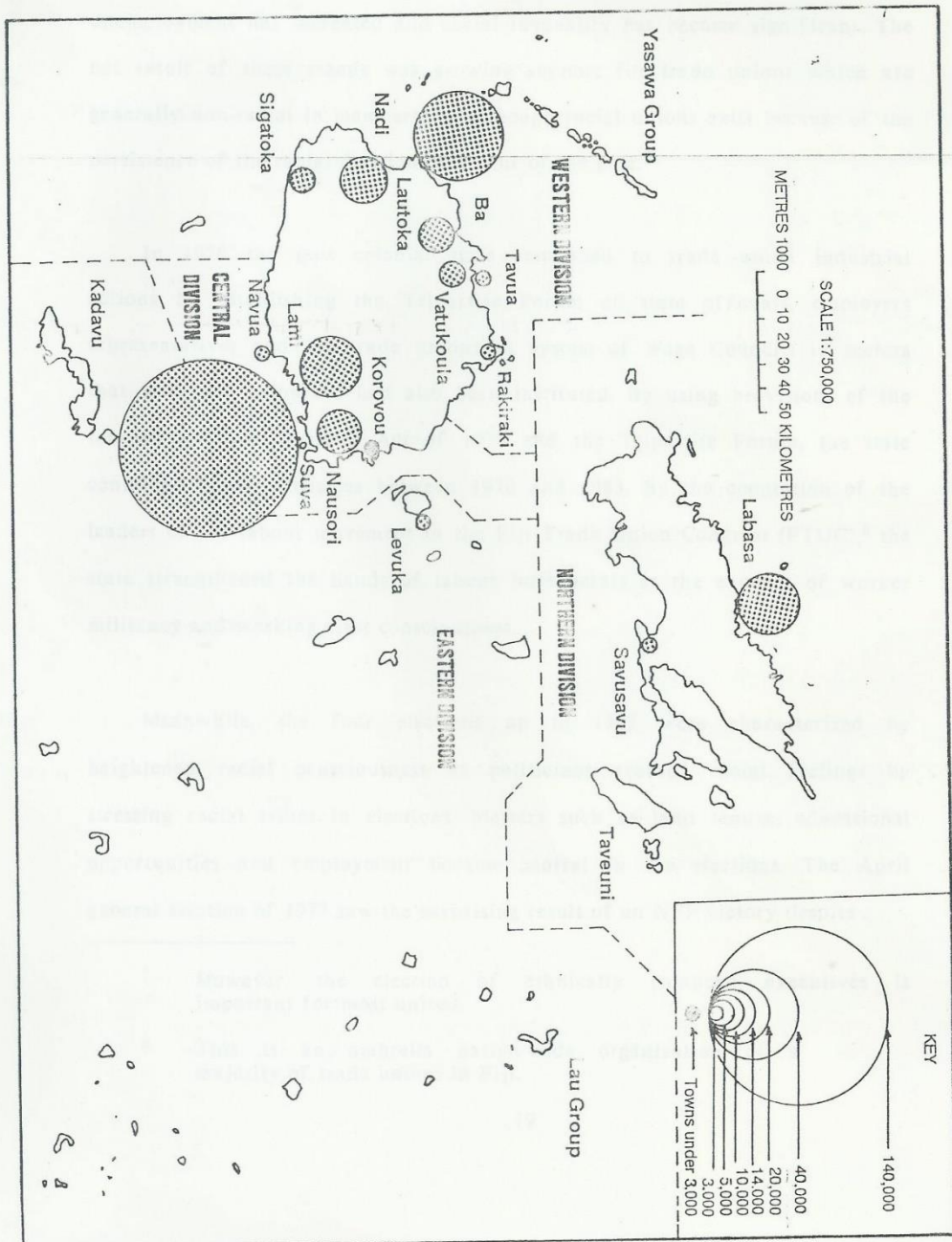
Table 5: Composition of the Fiji Senate

Nominees of the Great Council of Chiefs	8
Nominees of the Prime Minister	7
Nominees of the Leader of Opposition	6
Nominee of the Council of Rotuma	1
<hr/>	
Total	22

Third, Indo-Fijians were given citizenship of independent Fiji and with all other citizens were granted basic civil and political rights. These human rights included equality of treatment before the law and freedoms of expression, association, conscience and movement. The persistence of Ethnic Fijian and colonial norms considerably influenced the way in which Fijians enjoyed these citizenship rights. For many "customs of respect" for chiefs and elders contradicted the pretensions to democratic forms.

These politico-administrative structures which the constitution established and/or entrenched resulted in "racial consciousness" being enhanced especially during election times (Lal, 1986). It encouraged a system of patron-client relations and feelings of exclusive ethnic identity especially among Ethnic Fijians. A national identity was not forged. However, the continued expansion of capitalist relations encouraged by the post-colonial state's neo-colonial economic policies relating to tourism, forestry, fishery, industrialization, infrastructure, rural development and urbanization (see Map of Urban Population in Fiji) created new alignments that were non-racial.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF URBAN POPULATION IN FIJI, 1986



Between 1970 and 1975, Fiji's economy grew rapidly, opportunities for employment expanded and social inequality was reduced (Fiji Employment and Development Mission, 1984). Since then, growth rates have been low, unemployment has increased and social inequality has become significant. The net result of these trends was growing support for trade unions which are generally non-racial in membership, although racial unions exist because of the persistence of the racial division of labour of the past.⁷

In 1976 the post colonial state responded to trade union industrial actions by establishing the Tripartite Forum of state officials, employers representatives and the trade unions. A system of Wage Councils in sectors that were not unionized had also been instituted. By using provisions of the repressive Trade Disputes Act of 1973 and the Tripartite Forum, the state contained labour struggles between 1976 and 1983. By the cooptation of the leaders of the labour movement in the Fiji Trade Union Congress (FTUC),⁸ the state strengthened the hands of labour bureaucrats at the expense of worker militancy and working class consciousness.

Meanwhile, the four elections up to 1987 were characterized by heightened racial consciousness as politicians aroused racial feelings by stressing racial issues in elections. Matters such as land tenure, educational opportunities and employment became central in the elections. The April general election of 1977 saw the surprising result of an NFP victory despite

⁷ However, the election of ethnically balanced executives is important for most unions.

⁸ This is an umbrella nation-wide organization of a majority of trade unions in Fiji.

the possibility of perpetual Alliance Party rule established in the electoral system. The NFP received 26 seats, the Alliance 24, the Fijian Nationalist Party 1 and an independent 1. The Alliance Party loss was blamed on the emergence of the overtly racist Fijian Nationalist Party (FNP). This party called for the deportation of Indo-Fijians from Fiji. It attacked regional inequalities in state distribution of resources and the privileges of certain classes of Fijians. Although the FNP gained 25% of the votes cast by Ethnic Fijians, it only won one communal seat. The Alliance loss was due to NFP's success in national cross-voting seats. Many Ethnic Fijians simply refused to vote because they were dissatisfied with Alliance policies (Ali, 1980). The FNP's racist position did not prevent its candidates to work closely with the NFP (Premdas, 1978; Nation, 1978).

Internal factions within the NFP which had emerged in the open when voting for the Agricultural Land and Tenant Act (ALTA) took place, re-emerged during the days immediately following the election. The NFP was surprised by its victory and hesitated to form the government. It was not sure about the loyalty of senior civil servants, police officers and the exclusive Fijian army. Offers of coalition with the Alliance were rejected. After three days, the NFP was ready to form the government under the leadership of Siddiq Koya but the Governor General appointed Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, as Prime Minister. The minority Alliance government that was formed was the subject of a no-confidence motion. Sutherland has stated that:

The crisis of 1977, then, was a hiccup in the Alliance's uninterrupted rule. More importantly, it showed that principles of bourgeois democracy could be shelved if Fijian state power was threatened (Sutherland, 1984, 448).

In the second election of 1977, the Alliance was victorious, gaining 36 seats out of 52. The NFP was ripped apart as two factions, the Dove and Flower groups put forward parallel candidates. Religious (Hindu-Muslim) and other ethnic divisions among Indo-Fijians were used. The Flower faction gained 12 seats, the Dove faction 3 and an independent Ethnic Fijian retained his seat.

The recommendation of consultants of Business International (a Right Wing Organization), Allan Carroll and his colleagues in the now infamous "Carroll Report" to use internal religious and cultural divisions among Indo-Fijians as a means of winning the 1982 General Election provoked widespread controversy. The NFP and Western United Front (WUF)⁹ coalition made political capital out of this foreign interference. An ABC Four Corners television programme which exposed this collusion between the Alliance and outsiders was recorded into videos and circulated widely. Just when the NFP-WUF was on the verge of electoral victory, the Alliance leader used the opening lines of the Four Corners programme which said that Fiji's present political leaders were descendants of chiefs "who clubbed and ate their way to power" to arouse ethnic solidarity amongst Fijians. The Alliance publicised this "cannibal quote" and the television expos as a gross insult to Fijian chiefs and the Fijian people. Ethnic tensions increased. The Alliance won this election by 28 votes to 24.

⁹ A regional based-party of Western Ethnic Fijians, unhappy about the manner in which the Alliance government was managing the pine industry.

Following the 1982 General Election, a series of events culminated in the formation of the Fiji Labour Party (FLP) which in coalition with the NFP was to defeat the Alliance Party in the April 1987 General Election. These events included the 1982 unilateral decision of the Alliance Government to end its ban on American nuclear powered/armed warships from Fiji ports; a hunger strike by graduating teachers against the Volunteer Service Scheme; the teachers' unions strike against the forced de-segregation of Fiji schools by race and class; the rumours of corruption in high places. The single major event, that finally provoked the trade union movement to enter politics and contest for state power was the unilateral imposition of the wage freeze in November 1984.

This decision was made in the face of the economic recession that affected Fiji in the period 1982-1984. National disasters including hurricanes and droughts caused \$150 million of estimated damages. In 1983 sugar production declined by 46% at a time when world market price for sugar fell by 25%. Tourist revenue fell because of the world recession. Fiji's external debt had increased from \$194 million in 1980 to \$399 million in 1984. Debt servicing burdens had increased. Civil servants, numbering 17,000 absorbed more than 50% of the government's recurrent budget in salaries and wages. An IMF mission had maintained that Fiji's salaries were 15% too high.¹⁰ Ignoring its own Tripartite Forum, the state imposed a wage freeze on November 1, 1984.

¹⁰ It failed to state too high in relation to what!

The Fiji Trade Union Congress (FTUC) objected to this unilateral imposition but to no avail. In early 1985, the government organized a "National Economic Summit" which was boycotted by the FTUC and the opposition. The FTUC threatened a national strike. Prime Minister Ratu Mara countered by threatening to declare a state of emergency and to bring out Royal Fiji Military Force troops to man essential services. The FTUC realizing that the political opposition was too weak, launched the Fiji Labour Party (FLP).

Shortly after its formation in July 1985, the FLP took over the mantle of the opposition outside of the Parliament. It made critical comments on government policy much more effectively than did the faction-ridden NFP opposition. FLP criticised apparent official corruption, the TV deal with Australian Channel 9, official secrecy and government's economic policies. It also called for a common national name for all citizens of Fiji. Realizing that a three-way battle between the FLP, the NFP and the Alliance would only lead to the Alliance's victory, the FLP and NFP negotiated to form a coalition. The leader of the FLP, Dr. Bavadra was to be the leader of this coalition.

In the 1987 General Election, this NFP/FLP Coalition gained 28 seats as against the Alliance's 24 seats. In addition to gaining all the "Indian" communal seats, the NFP/FLP Coalition won all the national seats where Indo-Fijians were numerous. The NFP/FLP coalition also won 4 crucial national cross-voting seats in the Suva-Nausori region that were previously held by the Alliance. Vital to its victory in the two constituencies of Suva National and South Eastern National was the swing of General Electors and Ethnic

Fijian workers to the FLP-led Coalition.

After a month of being in government, Prime Minister Bavadra and his Cabinet (7 Indo-Fijians, 6 Ethnic Fijians and one General Elector) were overthrown in a coup-d'etat by the Royal Fiji Military Forces. A government of largely Alliance Party elements including former Prime Minister Mara was imposed. Subsequently when negotiations to establish a government of national unity between the democratically elected MPs of the Alliance and NFP/FLP Coalition was reaching fruition in the Deuba Accord, undemocratic Ethnic Fijian elements and the military took over government yet again. Fiji's constitution was abrogated and the country was declared a Republic against the wishes of a majority of Fiji's citizens.

Since April 1987, Fiji has had six different regimes and the country has joined the growing number of Third World countries where authoritarian governments of the military variety have taken over. Although the justification of the military actions has been the protection of indigenous Fijian rights, at no point were these threatened. The concern about racial violence because of the victory of the Indo-Fijian backed NFP/FLP Coalition did not eventuate. A majority of Ethnic and Indo-Fijians were prepared to accept the new government. A minority led by former Alliance Party Ministers formed the Taukei Movement which orchestrated violence. This provided the pretext for the Lt. Colonel, now Brigadier, Rabuka to overthrow the democratically elected government.

Fiji's political and economic crisis continues. The present stalemate in the political front shows that ethnicity was a secondary factor in the events of the last fifteen months. The main factor was the desire of powerful members of the ruling oligarchy to retain power at any cost. To overturn the electoral defeat after 17 years of rule and to regain power the ethnic loyalty of an almost exclusive Ethnic Fijian military was utilized.¹¹ The politicization of a professional army, renowned for its UNIFIL peace-keeping work in the Lebanon and in the USA led peace-keeping force in Sinai is most disturbing. The UN system continues to use Fiji troops.

In Fiji, there have been numerous violations of basic human rights, imprisonment without trial, restrictions on previous freedoms including the freedom of movement. The implementation of transport and trade bans has helped to restore some semblance of basic rights to life and property. Racism has increased as the military is being used to purge all those, particularly Indo-Fijians, in the civil service who are suspected of having sympathies with the NFP/FLP Coalition. Religious bigotry on the part of fundamentalist Methodists has resulted in the institution of Sunday bans which directly affect Indo-Fijian activities.

The present holders of state-power - almost entirely Ethnic Fijian members and sympathisers of the former Alliance Party - are seeking new relations with countries that are not so concerned about political and human rights. Among these countries are Indonesia, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore,

¹¹ The military forces in Fiji is 98% Ethnic Fijian.

South Korea and Japan.¹² The violation of the fundamental rights and non-discriminatory provisions of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights is not so much because of ethnicity per se but is the result of the use of race to perpetuate control over state power by a privileged minority. Economic forces in Fiji have thrown up cross-cutting alignments that the state is now attempting to control by restructuring the ethnic basis for political activities.

In the South Pacific the presence of two modes of production, the dominance of transnational capital and the vulnerability of monoculture economies result in contradictory pressures on state power holders. Ethnic politics was one way of managing these pressures in Fiji. When these failed then the pretense to democratic forms was manifested.

¹² Under the new Export Processing Zone instituted by the military-backed regime, Hong Kong, Australian, New Zealander, Israeli, Malaysian, Taiwanese and Japanese capital are investing in labour intensive manufacturing. Japanese capital is moving in a massive way into the tourist sector in Fiji and elsewhere in the South Pacific.

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