

HEGEMONY, ANTI-HEGEMONY AND COUNTER-HEGEMONY

Control, Resistance and Coups in Fiji

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Certificate of Authorship/Originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

The thesis argues that the colonial state in Fiji was founded upon ethno-cultural divisions, which continued in the post-colonial period with the establishment of indigenous chiefly political hegemony. By using a neo-Gramscian analytical framework based on the centrality of the role of ethnicity and culture in the study of colonial and post-colonial societies, the thesis develops three inter-related themes for the analysis of Fiji's political history: the role of colonial culture, the importance of ethno-cultural divisions, and the changing role of the military in hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony. The thesis proposes a dynamic model of de-colonisation that conceptualises Fiji's post-colonial political history in terms of hegemonic cycles that sees indigenous chiefly hegemony subside into factionalisation of the indigenous polity, inter-ethnic alliances and coercive indigenous assertion. These cycles operate as a product of conflict between hegemonic, anti-hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces. The study finds that the hegemonic cycles were interrupted by a failed indigenous coercive phase in 2000 which led to military counter-hegemony and the ouster of the indigenous political order in 2006. The thesis notes that the re-alignment of indigenous political forces, following the latest military intervention, had the potential to re-instate the hegemonic cycles. The neo-Gramscian model developed in the thesis has a projective element and can be used to analyse the role of ethnicity and culture in colonial and post-colonial hegemonies such as in the South Pacific region.

Fiji Words

Vanua	the interconnected relationship among god, land and the indigenous community in Fiji
Matanitu	Indigenous government
Mataqali	Indigenous Fijian landowning unit
Mata-ni-Vanua	Spokesperson for the indigenous village
Koro	Indigenous Fijian village
Lala	Indigenous Fijian customary practice of giving part of the first produce as tribute to the chief
Turaga-ni-Koro	Indigenous Village administrator
Buli	District Officer
Roko	Provincial Council
Roko Tui	Head of the Provincial Council
Tikina	District
Bulubulu	Traditional Indigenous Fijian way of dispute resolution
Luve-ni-wai	Waterbabies
Tuka	Immortality, associated with a cult movement called Tuka in the late nineteenth century in Fiji
Navosavakadua	A leader who speaks only once: a title conferred to indigenous Magistrates in Colonial Fiji
Veiqali	Principal township
Qali	A province or a town subject to another
Ratu	Title of a male indigenous chief
Tabu	Prohibition
i-taukei	Indigenous Fijians
Bete	Priest
Yavusa	Clan
i-tokatoka	An extended family unit
Tui	A village chief
Bati	A indigenous Fijian warrior
Adi	Title of an indigenous female chief
Girmit	A term used by Indo-Fijians to describe Indians who came to Fiji from India to work as indenture labourers in Fiji from 1879 to 1916
Jihaji	The boat people

INTRODUCTION

The thesis analyses Fiji's political history by utilising an adapted neo-Gramscian theoretical framework which analyses hegemony in terms of ethnicity and culture. The thesis argues that previous Development, World System and neo-Gramscian IPE approaches do not take into account the cultural logic of political hegemony nor do these appreciate the power of ethnicity in shaping social and political discourses in colonial and post-colonial societies. Only recently, since the 1980s, neo-Gramscian scholars have attempted to integrate culture and ethnicity in their study of colonial and post-colonial political and social formations. Using similar neo-Gramscian analytical themes, I analyse the political history of Fiji as an interaction of social forces and power in colonial and post-colonial hegemonies. The thesis applies this neo-Gramscian approach to construct a dynamic model of de-colonisation and is based on Robert Cox's social-historical theory and Joseph Femia's epistemological perspectivism that emphasises the role of power in political action (Chapter 1).

This thesis also contributes to Fiji's historiography (Chapter 2) by developing a new theoretical paradigm to explain political hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony in post-colonial Fiji as a long period of de-colonisation, characterised by a cyclical pattern from 1970 to 2006 of chiefly hegemony, factionalisation of the indigenous bloc, inter-ethnic alliances and the assertion of indigenous coercive hegemony, which had its origins in colonial Fiji. I further

argue that this pattern was broken in 2006 by the Fiji military forces commander, Frank Bainimarama, who overthrew the indigenous political bloc in a coup and implemented policies to de-ethnicise Fiji politics. However, following the coup, there was political re-alignment of indigenous forces against the military, raising the prospects of re-instatement of the cycle of violence.

Fiji's colonial and post-colonial history continues to be shaped by race and culture. Racial and cultural schisms at national and sub-national levels play a key role in hegemonic formations. For an in depth grasp of Fiji's complex socio-political forces, it becomes necessary to look closer and deeper at ethnicity, culture and sub-culture, which perpetuates ethnic discord and political conflict in the country.

Fiji became a crown colony from 1874 and became an independent nation in 1970. Throughout the colonial period, the indigenous chiefs ruled with the colonial authorities, and the origins of the relationship between the indigenous chiefs and the Europeans emanated from an alliance between the two during the political ascendancy of the kingdom of Bau. Followed the cession of Fiji to Britain in the 1870s, a three-tiered ethnic bloc was established with the Europeans in charge of the political affairs and the economy¹ of the colony, the

¹ Between 1880 and 1973, the economy of Fiji was dominated by the Australian Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR). See: Stephen G. Britton, "The evolution of a colonial space-economy: The case of Fiji," **Journal of Historical Geography**, Vol. 6, No. 3, 1980, pp. 251-274, and Bruce Knapman, *Capitalism and Colonial Development: Studies in the Economic History of Fiji 1874-1939*, PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 1984. Knapman argues that the expansion of the sugar economy in Fiji was founded on exploitation of

indigenous Fijian chiefs providing guidance on indigenous welfare and land, and Indian indentured workers providing labour for the European plantation economy. All three ethnic groups were segregated from each other by the European colonisers through an underlying racial contract,² where each ethnic community had its own sphere of social and economic development, regulated by various race-based colonial laws. This framework has played a central role in Fijian politics ever since.

The racial contract has its origins in colonial Fiji and operates in distinct forms during colonial and post-colonial hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony. These distinctions are revealed through my new historical materialist interpretation of Fiji's political history by focusing on the role of political forces in particular the contours of political domination, political status of resistance and political realignment of social forces that lead to change in government. These concepts are embedded in neo-Gramscian model that provides a discursive evaluation of Fiji politics. However, before we examine the theoretical basis of the racial contract, it is important to define the use of neo-Gramscian terms such as hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony.

Hegemony is defined as dominant social and political forces in colonial and

indentured Indian labour and on technological innovation by the CSR.

² In Fiji, a legal contract in the form of the Deed of Cession existed between the Crown and the indigenous Fijian chiefs, permitting chiefs to guide the Crown on indigenous land but also allowed the Crown to establish contracts with Indian workers.

post-colonial Fiji. This definition of hegemony borrows from neo-Gramscian interpretation³ of hegemony as social and political forces principally generated by the modes of social relations and determined by elements critical to the historical structure such as colonial legacy, the role of ethnicity and culture and the influences of armed forces in hegemony. The dominant social and political forces in this thesis relates primarily to political leadership and political hegemony which are used synonymously.⁴

Anti-Hegemony is resistance by social and sub-cultural groups to the domination by hegemonic social and political forces. Neo-Gramscian scholar John Hobson argued that social movements can be conceptualised as dissident or anti-hegemonic.⁵ In another study using neo-Gramscian theory, Nicholas Rowe⁶ developed a comprehensive definition of anti-hegemony “as a response by social groups” to political and social domination as part of his framework for the analysis of dance as a form of resistance in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Counter-hegemony is organised social challenge that eventually replaces the

³ Randolph Prasad, **Counter-Hegemony and Foreign Policy: The Dialectics of Marginalized and Global Forces in Jamaica**, (Albany: University of New York Press, 2001), p.48.

⁴ Derek Boothman, “The Sources of Gramsci’s Concept of Hegemony,” **Re-thinking Marxism**, Vol. 20, Issue, 2, 2008, p. 201.

⁵ Stephen Hobden and John Hobson (eds), **Historical Sociology of International Relations**, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 155.

⁶ Nicholas Rowe, “Dance Education in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: hegemony, counter-hegemony and anti-hegemony,” **Research in Dance Education**, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2008, pp. 3-20.

former political order.⁷ Neo Gramscian theorist Nicola Pratt⁸ has described counter-hegemony as the creation of an alternative hegemony on the terrain of civil society in preparation for political change. Carroll and Ratner⁹ have argued that besides providing alternative hegemony, counter-hegemony offers a viable political alternative backed by a coalition of societal forces.

The above definitions form the conceptual basis for neo-Gramscian model for Fiji that is used to study the character of historical formations. The neo-Gramscian interpretation of hegemony when applied to Fiji means the domination of the colonial and the chiefly political and social forces during the colonial period and the domination of the chiefs in post-colonial Fiji until the coup of December 2006. Anti-hegemony in Fiji was in the form of social and sub-cultural dissident movements from indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians in both colonial and post-colonial Fiji. However, in colonial Fiji, the social and sub-cultural anti-hegemonic forces were unable to form a successful countervailing force and replace the political order, even though attempts were made to achieve this during 1959 strike. Nevertheless, the re-configuration of social forces in 1987 and in 1999 led to political counter-hegemony and the transformation of the state but these achievements were short-lived as

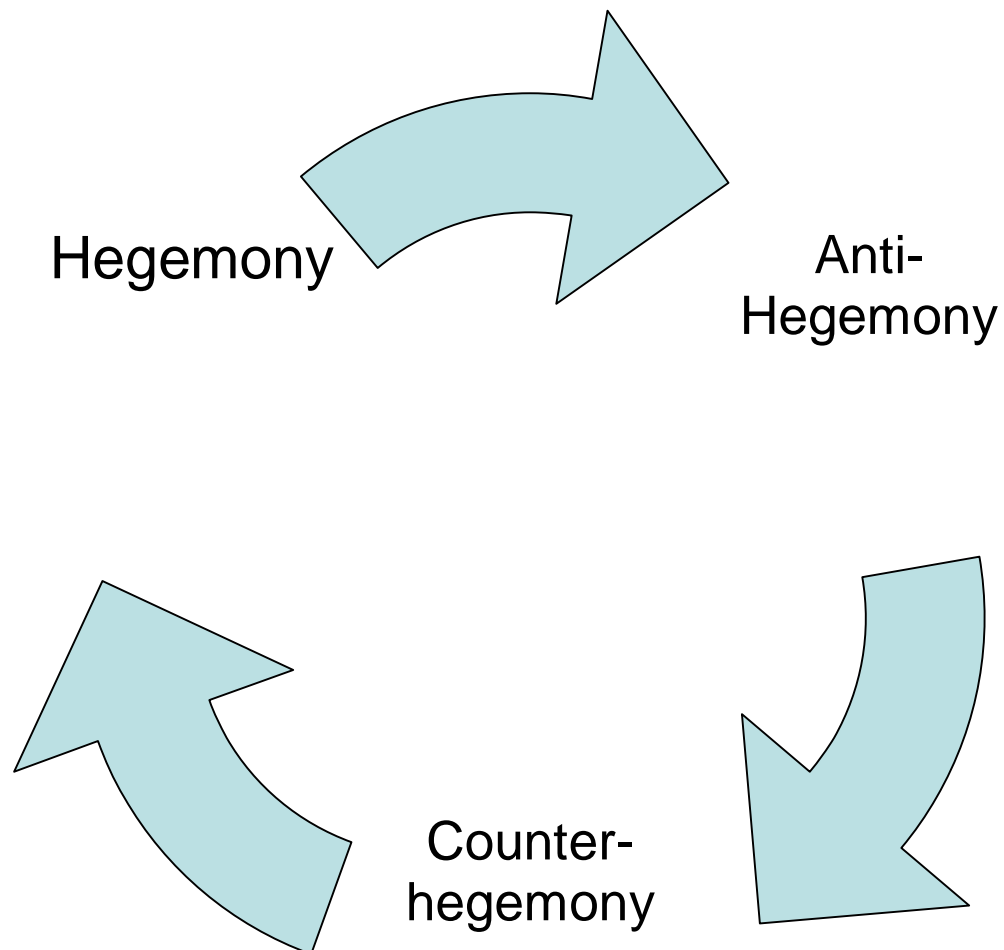
⁷ Owen Worth, "The Janus-like Character of Counter-hegemony: Progressive and Nationalist Responses to Neoliberalism," **Global Society**, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2002, p. 300.

⁸ Nicola Pratt, "Bringing Politics back in: examining the link between globalization and democratization," **Review of International Political Economy**, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2004, p. 332.

⁹ William Carroll and R.S. Ratner, "Between Leninism and Radical Pluralism: Gramscian Reflections on Counter-Hegemony and the New Social Movements," **Critical Sociology**, Vol. 20, No. 2, 1994, pp. 3-26.

indigenous nationalist social forces reclaimed the state by force and established the hegemony of the chiefs with the assistance of the military. Since 2000, the military, which had played a central role in breaking up anti-hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces in the past, started its own anti-hegemonic movement against indigenous nationalists, leading to counter-hegemony in December 2006. These cycles of hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony form a unique model for the study of material history of Fiji.

Political Change in Fiji: A neo-Gramscian Model



The neo-Gramscian model operates within the three broad neo-Gramscian analytical themes which look at the colonial legacy, the role of ethnicity and culture and the changing role of the military in hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony. More importantly, hegemonic, anti-hegemonic and counter-hegemonic histories of Fiji were influenced by an underlying racial contract that operated both horizontally and vertically in the colonial and post-colonial periods and forms the basis for my argument.

The Argument

My argument is that by using neo-Gramscian theory, we can better understand the role of ethnicity and culture in forming a racial contract between the three ethnic groups in Fiji, and better gauge its central role in shaping colonial and post-colonial political discourses. In Fiji, the racial contract was at first between the Europeans and the indigenous Fijian chiefs and since 1879, this racial contract has included Indian indentured labourers and their descendants. The racial contract in Fiji between the three communities was based on ethnic hierarchy, where the Europeans were the privileged ruling class, followed by the indigenous chiefs and then the Indian labourers. The idea of a racial contract was that there always existed an unwritten contract based on exploitation between whites and blacks. Charles Mill¹⁰ in 1997 emphasised the role of racial hierarchy in the exercise of political power by defining the relationship between those of colour and whites in his seminal “racial contract”.

¹⁰ Charles Mill, **The Racial Contract**, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

Mills thesis was based on the historical exploitation of blacks in the United States by the predominantly white political order.

Charles Mill argued that “white supremacy is the unnamed political system that has made the modern world what it is today. You will not find this term in introductory, or even advanced, texts in political theory.”¹¹ Basing his argument on Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s social contract¹² and Carol Pateman’s¹³ sexual contract, Mill asserts that the Racial Contract is a set of formal or informal agreements or meta-agreements between the members of one sub-set of humans. The most salient feature of the racial contract in the modern world is that it restricts possession of natural freedom and equality to white men.”¹⁴

Mill argues:

The Racial Contract prescribes to its signatories an inverted epistemology, an epistemology of ignorance, a particular pattern of localised and global cognitive dysfunctions (which are psychologically and socially functional), producing an ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to understand the world they themselves have made.”¹⁵

Mill notes that ideological foundation of the racial contract creates “consensual

¹¹ Ibid, p. 1.

¹² Jean-Jacques Rousseau, **Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Inequality among Men**, (London: Penguin Press, 1984).

¹³ Carol Pateman, **The Sexual Contract**, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

¹⁴ Charles Mill, **The Racial Contract**, p. 16.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 18.

hallucination” based on white mythologies, inverted Orients, inverted Africas, and inverted Americas. The Racial Contract is an exploitation contract that creates global European economic domination and national white racial privilege.”¹⁶ Charles Mill highlighted that the economic underdevelopment of non-White countries was due to white economic exploitation and domination and this cycle of domination and exploitation continues through the racial contract, which underwrites the social contract. Moreover to break out of this cycle of white constructed global and local reality, the so called “white constructed ontology”, an individual and a non-white collective have to overcome the “internalisation of sub person-hood prescribed by the racial contract.”¹⁷

Racial contract is embedded in colonialism and Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge have argued that in the Pacific, western historicism is readily appropriated by colonised races and the process of colonisation has affected races differently and “produced not generalist but discrepant narratives.”¹⁸ Not only in the Pacific but elsewhere in the world, non-white racial groups have increasingly conceptualised their own cultures and traditions through the narratives of the white colonisers. Using Said, it is argued that the racial contract can be “deconstructed via the subaltern imaginary.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 31.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 118.

¹⁸ Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodges, “What is Post-colonialism?,” **New Literary History**, Vol. 36, 2005, p. 395.

¹⁹ Edward Said, **Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient**, (NY: Pantheon Books, 1978).

In Fiji, the racial contract between ethnic communities in the colonial period played a major part in influencing post-colonial politics. Unlike Mills racial contract between whites and blacks, the colonial administration in Fiji asserted the cultural hegemony of indigenous chiefs by establishing the Great Council of Chiefs in 1875. This cultural hegemony was transformed into a political hegemony after independence in 1970 where the chiefs re-asserted political power by increasing relying on force in 1987 to counter inter-ethnic alliances, aimed at unraveling the racial contract established during the colonial period.

My argument extends the central theme of the racial contract by identifying underlying ideological, social and historical forces that generate, maintain and reproduce the contract at the socio-political level. By applying neo-Gramscian analytical themes of culture and ethnicity, this thesis will argue that there was a colonial historic bloc established with the support of the indigenous Fijian chiefs, who played a dominant political role in the affairs of the nation before cession of the colony to Britain. After cession, the cultural hegemony of the chiefs was established with the formation of the Council of Chiefs, which provided guidance to the colonial administration on indigenous affairs and granted recognition of their rights over indigenous land. Moreover, the Council of Chiefs exerted power over indigenous Fijians through indigenous institutional structures such as the Native Land Trust Board, the Fijian Affairs Board, village administration and the Methodist Church.

During the colonial period, Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians started to

challenge both the cultural hegemony of the chiefs and the political hegemony of the colonial administration. My examples on indigenous resistance are taken from various sub-cultural anti-hegemonic movements: the Tuka, the Luveniwai, the Nawai and the Bula Tale movements of the colonial period. Indo-Fijian resistance is highlighted in the 1920-21, the 1943 and the 1960 strikes against the colonial government and the CSR. Moreover, anti-hegemonic challenges widened in the post-colonial period with the formation of the indigenous Fijian nationalist movement in the 1970s and the Western United Front in the early 1980s, culminating in cross-cultural inter-ethnic class formation with the establishment of the Fiji Labour Party in 1985. Inter-ethnic collaboration led to the formation of a counter-hegemonic multi-ethnic bloc in 1987 which dislodged the chiefs from power. The chiefs in response sought political intervention from an indigenous-dominated military to restore the political as well as the cultural hegemony of the chiefs. The coups of 1987 restored chiefly political power but once power was monopolised, indigenous factionalisation emerged once again and Fiji continued the cyclical path of indigenous factionalisation, inter-ethnic alliances and coercive indigenous hegemony. However, in 2000, attempts by indigenous militants to impose an indigenous political order by force failed, resulting in further divisions and fragmentation of the indigenous community, including the Great Council of Chiefs and the military. As a result of the fragmentation caused by the 2000 coup, the indigenous bloc was challenged by the commander of the Republic of the Fiji Military Forces, Frank Bainimarama, who led a counter-coup against the indigenous political establishment in December 2006.

Following Gramsci, this political history of Fiji is analysed in terms of the dialectics of hegemony and counter-hegemony.²⁰ According to Alastair, “what interested Gramsci about the historical process of the evolution of the modern state was the way it educated the majority to consensus in its rule”²¹ In Fiji, political hegemony of the colonial government as well as the indigenous chiefs was made possible by cementing racial prejudices and biases and thereby undermining inter-ethnic class consciousness. The British colonial policy²² of separating Indo-Fijians, indigenous Fijians and Europeans provided the framework for ethnic and cultural exclusion, which continued in the post-colonial period. Indigenous nationalists argued that the military coups of 1987²³ had put Fiji finally on the path of de-colonisation. In fact, the events of 1987 demonstrated a failure of the post-colonial political hegemony, established by the colonial authorities and the indigenous chiefs. After the failure of the indigenous coercive hegemony in 2000, the military in Fiji started to question the indigenous political bloc, leading to the December 2006 coup and the dismissal of the Great Council of Chiefs in April 2007.

²⁰ Alastair Davidson, “Antonio Gramsci,” in P. Beilharz (ed), **Social theory: a guide to central thinkers**, (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1991), p. 127.

²¹ Ibid, p. 128.

²² Ahmed Ali, "Has Planning Progressed? The Past for the Future," Siona Tupounioa, Ron Crocombe and Claire Slatter (eds), **The Pacific Way: Social Issues in National Development**, (Suva: Fiji Times and Herald, 1980), p. 10.

²³ Vijay Naidu, "The Destruction of Multiracial Democracy in Fiji," Satendra Prasad (ed), **Coup and Crisis: Fiji-A Year Later**, (North Carlton: Arena Publications, 1988), pp.4-12; Robert Robertson and Akosita Tamanisau, **Fiji: The Shattered Coups**, (Liechhardt: Pluto Press, 1988); John Overton, "The Coups of 1987: A Personal Analysis," **Pacific Viewpoint**, Volume 30, No. 2, 1989, pp. 116-131; Ralph R. Premdas, "Military Intervention in Fiji: Fear of ethnic Domination," **Social and Economic Studies**, Volume 4, No.1, 1992, pp. 103-155.

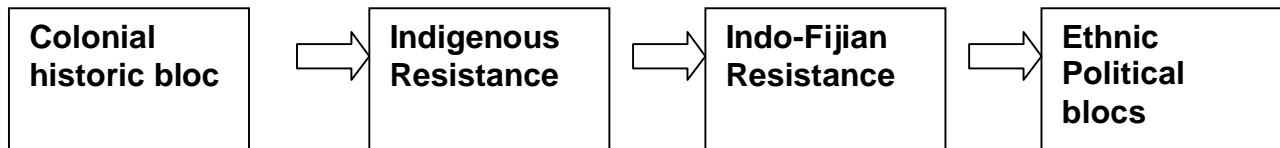
Colonial Fiji: 1874-1970

This thesis (Chapters 3, 4 and 5) analyses the colonial historic-bloc, which had four distinct phases. The first phase was the establishment of the colonial order based on the experience of Bau. In this phase, the cultural hegemony of the chiefs was cemented with the formation of the Great Council of Chiefs and the Fijian Administration. However, a conflict of interest between the chiefs and the Europeans led some Governors to challenge the cultural authority of the chiefs and in particular policies on the alienation of indigenous land.

The next two phases involved resistance to the colonial bloc from indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian anti-hegemonic movements. Indigenous Fijian resistance took the form of sub-cultural movements (the Hill Tribes, the Tuka, the Luve ni Wai, the Nawai and the Bula Tale movements) whereas Indo-Fijians, after the end of indenture in 1920, directly challenged the colonial historic bloc, including the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR) during the 1920-21, the 1943 and the 1960 strikes. Chandra Jayawardena notes that in colonial Fiji, there was an “implicit division of labour in government; the colonial government administered indigenous Fijians, while Indo-Fijians on the plantations came under the bailiwick of the CSR Company.”²⁴ The colonial administration with the assistance of indigenous chiefs re-enforced the racial contract by dividing indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians along ethnic and cultural lines and as a result, by the 1960s, both communities had formed rival ethnic and political

²⁴ Chandra Jayawardana, “Culture and Ethnicity in Guyana and Fiji,” **Man**, Vol. 15, No. 3, 1980, p. 444.

blocs. The foundations of post-colonial Fiji had its origins in colonial Fiji and it was “races” that were being formed and hardened.²⁵ The four phases of the colonial period are illustrated below.



Post-Colonial Fiji: 1970-2006

The thesis (Chapters 6, 7 and 8) argues that the cultural hegemony of the chiefs in colonial Fiji was transformed into the political hegemony of the chiefs in post-colonial Fiji from. Post-colonial Fiji went through cycles (1970-1987 and 1992-2006) of chiefly political hegemony (1970-1987), factionalisation of the indigenous bloc (1975, 1982, 1987, and 1999), inter-ethnic alliances (1987 and 1999) and the assertion of indigenous coercive hegemony (1987, 2000 and 2006). Besides these cycles, post-colonial chiefly hegemony is at three levels: within the indigenous Fijian community, over the state system and over other ethnic groups.

The first cycle of chiefly political hegemony, factionalisation of the indigenous bloc, inter-ethnic alliances and indigenous coercive hegemony began when the political hegemony of the chiefs was consolidated in post-colonial Fiji by the chief-led Alliance Party, which formed racial contracts with a minority faction of

²⁵ Martha Kaplan and John. D. Kelly, “On Discourse and Power: ‘Cults and ‘Orientals’ in Fiji,” **American Ethnologist**, Vol. 26, No.4, 1999, pp. 855-856.

the Indo-Fijian community and the Europeans (General Voters). The political arrangement of the chiefs was challenged in 1975 by indigenous nationalists, led by Sakeasi Buatdroka, who argued that the racial contract of the Alliance Party ought to be nullified and Indo-Fijians promptly deported to India.

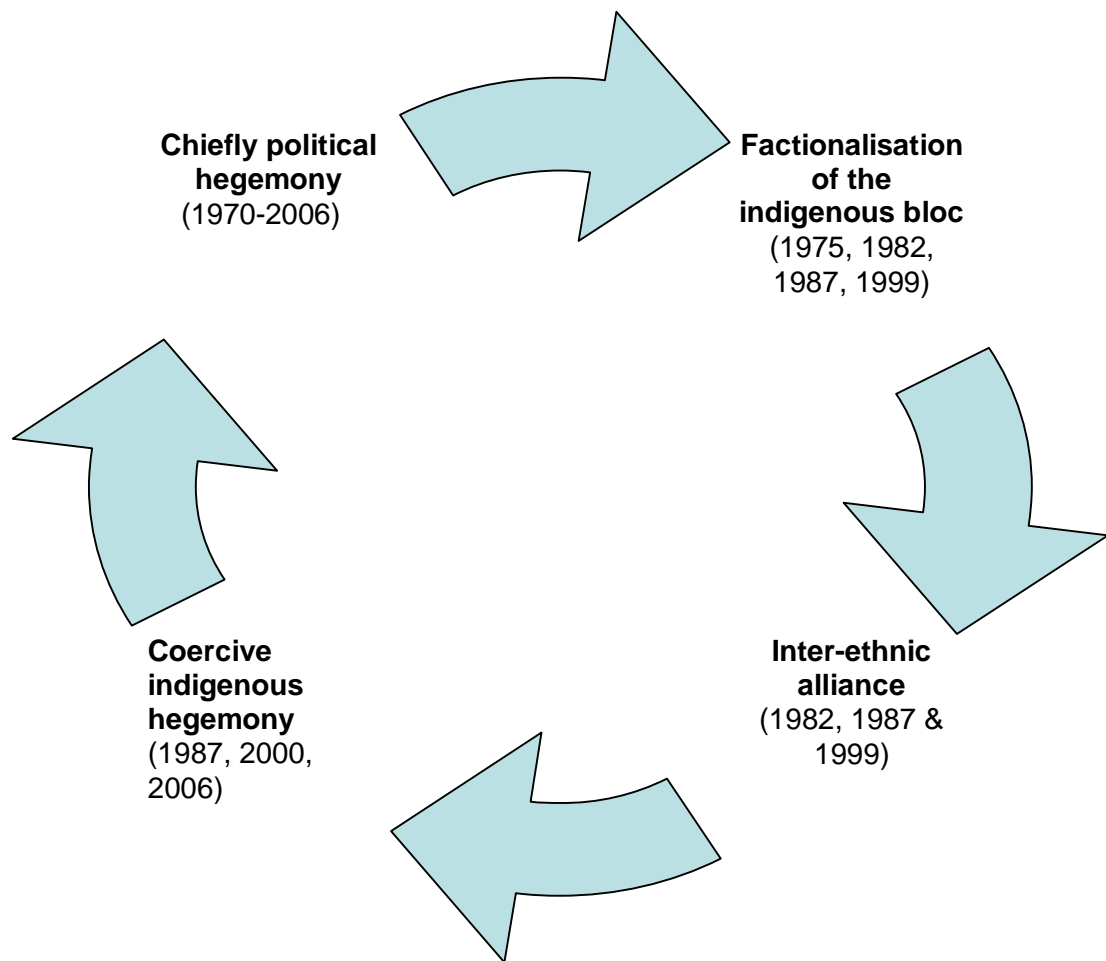
Buatdroka's Fijian Nationalist Party fractured the indigenous political bloc in the first 1977 election allowing the Indo-Fijian NFP to win office. However, divisions and indecisions on the part of the NFP leadership led to the intervention of the Governor General and the restoration of the chiefly political bloc. In 1982, the indigenous bloc further fragmented with the formation of a region-based Western United Front, which formed an inter-ethnic alliance with the NFP but was unsuccessful in winning office. However, in 1987, the Fiji Labour Party, which was based on inter-ethnic class alliances between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians, dislodged the chiefs from political power, resulting in military intervention and the re-assertion of chiefly political hegemony.

The second cycle began in 1987 after indigenous chiefs were once again in political control following the military coups of 1987. In 1990, a racially-weighted constitution was implemented and the Great Council of Chiefs sponsored the Soqosoqo ni Vakevulewa in Taukei Party (SVT) to preserve and promote chiefly and indigenous interests. After the general election of 1992, the indigenous political bloc started to fragment following a period of infighting within the SVT which led to the formation of the Fijian Association Party in 1994. In an attempt to arrest growing indigenous factionalisation, the SVT

leader, Sitiveni Rabuka, formed an alliance with the Indo-Fijian leader Jai Ram Reddy and implemented constitutional reforms. However, the new constitution accelerated indigenous factionalisation. In 1999, the Fiji Labour Party once again formed inter-ethnic alliances with indigenous Fijians parties and democratically ousted the chiefs from power. However, the indigenous bloc, that was defeated in the 1999 election, resurrected the theme of ethnic divisions and in 2000, indigenous nationalists hijacked members of the Peoples' Coalition government and held them hostage for 56 days. Unlike the coups of 1987, in 2000, indigenous coercion failed due to divisions among chiefs and the military.

The indigenous bloc established following the 2000 coup was challenged by the military which overthrew the indigenous political order in December 2006, restructured colonial institutions (the Native Land Trust Board and the Great Council of Chiefs) and implemented the Peoples' Charter, aimed at the de-ethnicisation of Fiji. Moreover, the interim-government proposed de-reserving indigenous land for commercial farming, resulting in protests from indigenous landowners and chiefs. Indigenous groups remained opposed to the coercive military hegemony and members of the deposed government, the Methodist Church of Fiji and the Great Council of Chiefs challenged the military and the interim-government, raising the possibility of the continuation of the cycle of hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony.

The post-colonial cycle from 1970 to 2006 is illustrated below.



De-ethnicisation of Fiji: 2006 Onwards

This thesis (Chapter 9) also argues that after the 2000 coup, a considerably weak chiefly political hegemony was established. The post-2000 indigenous order was challenged by an indigenous-dominated military which transformed itself from an ethnic entity that supported indigenous chiefly hegemony to one that advocated de-ethnicisation of Fiji politics. Under the leadership of the Fiji Military Forces commander Frank Bainimarama, the military after the 2000 coup started to question the indigenous bloc and in particular the cultural authority of the Great Council of Chiefs after some of its members supported

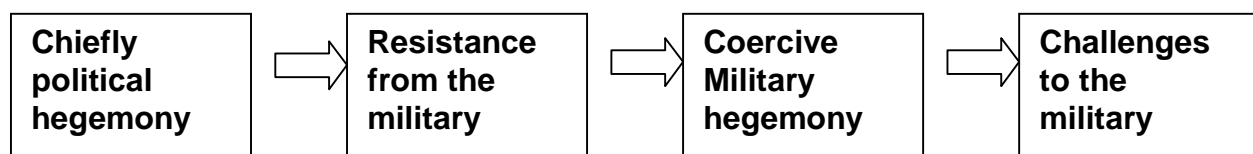
the nationalist agenda of the George Speight group against the spirit of the multiethnic 1997 Constitution.

The 2000 coup was based on the strategy of unifying factionalised indigenous groups under a hegemonic indigenous bloc. However, the coup failed because it did not have the support of some influential chiefs, it was led by a small group within the army (the Counter Revolutionary Warfare Unity) and once the coup did not progress according to plan, the coup leadership became partisan and started to exploit provincial divisions to further its objective. To manage an increasingly unstable state, the Great Council of Chiefs supported the nominees of the coup leaders to the position of President and the Vice President, assisted in establishing an indigenous interim government with policies along the lines advocated by the militant nationalists, and further vested in the President the cultural authority to act outside the multiethnic constitution. In doing so, the Great Council of Chiefs undermined its cultural as well as constitutional authority and exposed itself to attacks from the military.

The military leadership insisted since 2001 that the indigenous-dominated government promote inter-ethnic cooperation and bring to accountability the chiefs and their supporters. The indigenous chiefly hierarchy resisted the military as the indigenous government moved to introduce legislation to grant amnesty to the participants of the 2000 coup. Following a racially divisive 2006 general election, the indigenous government attempted to counter threats of a coup by embracing multiparty cabinet. However, resistance from the military

continued resulting in the December 2006 takeover.

After the coup, the commander of the Fiji Military Forces sought assistance from Indo-Fijian leaders to form a multi-ethnic interim-government and implemented the Peoples' Charter, which provided a post-coup framework for the de-ethnicisation of Fiji politics. However, the indigenous bloc, deposed in the 2006 coup, challenged military's intervention in politics. The four phases of the post-2000 Fiji are illustrated below.



The themes from colonial, post-colonial and post-2006 Fiji demonstrate the centrality of colonial legacy in shaping post-colonial hegemony, the role of inter-ethnic politics in hegemony, and the role of the military in the post-colonial context. Moreover, a unique characteristic of post-colonial Fiji is the long period of de-colonisation, characterised by the post-colonial cycle of the political hegemony of the chiefs, the factionalisation of the indigenous bloc, inter-ethnic alliances and coercive indigenous assertions. In 2006, the military ousted the indigenous political bloc from power. However, sections of the indigenous community opposed the military takeover and raised the possibility of re-instating chiefly political hegemony by democratic means.

Methodology

This thesis uses Robert Cox's critical theory and Robert Femia's concept of the centrality of political power in hegemonic formations (epistemological perspectivism) to analyse the role of ethnicity and culture in shaping political hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony in colonial and post-colonial Fiji.

Robert Antonio notes that post-modernism has helped to stimulate new academic programs in cultural studies and defines epistemological perspectivism as the study of the politics of race, gender, sexual preference and ethnicity and encourages an "appreciative stance towards diverse movements, identities and politics."²⁶ Perspectivism challenges Marxist concepts of production and class and argues that there are a number of exploited cultural groups whose oppression cannot be explained fully by analysing only the economic sub-structure. The aim of perspectivism is to bring suppressed and marginalised views to the center of the political debate. Epistemological perspectivism argues that political contingencies, reflective action and openness are embedded in power relations and this approach is reflected in the work of Gramscian theorist Joseph Femia.

Femia argues that "Gramsci eventually came to view hegemony as the most

²⁶ Robert J. Antonio, "Mapping Post Modern Social Theory," in A. Sica (ed), **What is Social Theory**, (Massachussets: Blackwell Press, 1998), pp. 31-36; also see Elsbeth Probyn, "Body", in George Ritzer (ed), **Encyclopedia of social theory**, (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005), pp. 62-65.

important face of power” and elaborates that “state power arises logically out of the requirements of a set of social arrangements whose very persistence is always at stake.”²⁷ Furthermore, Femia highlights that Gramsci’s prison notebooks puts forward a thesis that “a social group can, and indeed must, already exercise leadership before winning governmental power.”²⁸

Political power then becomes a key variable in the study of hegemonic formations and Femia interprets hegemony as “as set of ideas which are dominant as a consequence of a particular structure of power.”²⁹ Essentially, hegemonic power rests with coercive instruments of the state but Femia highlights that there is an alternative strategy based on the “peaceful acquisition of power.”³⁰

While epistemological perspectivists like Joseph Femia focus on reflective action and its location in power, Robert Cox, in contrast, is a critical realist and a materialist and emphasises the role of social forces in hegemonic formations. These tensions between the two contending views are acknowledged and form the basis for the research question, which seeks to illustrate openness and reflective action as a normative aspect of political change and further develops

²⁷ Joseph Femia, “Hegemony and Consensus in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci,” **Political Studies**, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1975, p.31. Also see **Gramsci’s Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process**, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

²⁸ Joseph Femia, “Hegemony and Consensus in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci,” p. 34.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 47.

³⁰ Joseph Femia, “Gramsci, The Via Italiana and the Classical Marxist-Lennist Approach to Revolution,” **Government and Opposition**, Vol. 14, Issue 1, 1979, p. 75.

neo-Gramscian analytical themes that identify stages of historical and political change in Fiji.

Robert Cox notes that an “alternative approach might start by redefining what is to be explained.”³¹ This thesis, uses neo-Gramscian concepts of hegemony (both political and cultural), anti-hegemony (indigenous and Indo-Fijian resistance in colonial and post-colonial Fiji), counter-hegemony (specific periods in Fiji history where inter-ethnic alliances, or horizontal re-alignment of the racial contract, led to the transformation of the Fijian state) and historic blocs (colonial and chief-led) to analyse political history.³² Fiji’s history operates within the dialectics of colonial and post-colonial consensus and coercion, control and resistance. Moreover, by applying neo-Gramscian concepts to Fiji, the readers will get an alternative historical sociological understanding of the relationship among political power, ethnicity, culture and militarism, and extend the neo-Gramscian analytical paradigm to become an element of progressive critique of Fiji’s past.

In Fiji, the indigenous chiefs established cultural and political hegemony and exercised political power before cession and during the colonial period, political power was vested in the colonial authorities whereas indigenous chiefs maintained cultural hegemony through the Council of Chiefs, which sat at the

³¹ Robert Cox, “Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory,” **Millennium: Journal of International Relations**, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1981, p. 139.

³² Richard Howson, “From Ethico-Political Hegemony to Post Marxism,” **Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture and Society**, Vol. 19, No.2, 2007, p. 236.

apex of the Fijian administration. At independence, political power was transferred back to the indigenous Fijian chiefs. Epistemological perspectivism provides the methodology for the study of political power in colonial and post-colonial Fiji hegemonies. Moreover, it allows for an appreciation of the ways in which political power was used in colonial and post-colonial periods to counter challenges to hegemony.

Anti-hegemonic indigenous sub-cultural movements challenged chiefly cultural hegemony and the political hegemony of the colonial government. Not only indigenous Fijians but Indo-Fijians, after indenture, rebelled against the colonial authorities and the CSR, which was part of the colonial historic bloc. Moreover, Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians formed inter-ethnic alliances in post-colonial Fiji to challenge chiefly political hegemony. These alliances were social formations based on collective inter-ethnic experience on resistance (anti-hegemony) against the chiefly political authority. The methodology for the analysis of colonial and post-colonial social hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony is provided by the work of Robert Cox. The thesis provides an historical account of Fiji's political history that is embedded in social theory so conforms to a model of historical sociology where the objective is to draw out underlying general themes shaping political formations.

Theda Skocpol argues that historical sociology allows for the application of theoretical ideas and historical evidence on historical cases.³³ Craig Calhoun³⁴

³³ Theda Skocpol, **Vision and Method in Historical Sociology**, (Cambridge:

extends this argument by emphasising that some phenomenon happen over a period of time and as a result, more than just a brief sociological focus is required. Calhoun³⁵ further asserts that the work of Antonio Gramsci, while less directly historical, is appropriated into historical sociology because of his concerns for historical variations and themes. In this thesis, historical sociological approach is used to provide an alternative interpretation of Fiji's political history.

In addition, epistemological perspectivism is also used to address the issue of political power. Gramscian theorist Joseph Femia used epistemological perspectivism to challenge Cox's critical theory as reactionary and for instance status quo oriented."³⁶ Femia argued that Gramsci was more of a Machiavellian and conceptualised Marxism as a discourse on power. According to Femia, "for Gramsci, Marxism, as a form of historicism, could not transcend the historical contradictions it reflected"³⁷ : its predictions of the future were an expression of hope masquerading as scientific analysis. For Femia, Cox's critical theory does not appreciate the role of state power in hegemony and as a result there are difficulties in appropriating Cox's critical theory. To resolve the tensions between Robert Cox's and Joseph Femia's interpretations of Gramsci, I adopt

Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. ix.

³⁴ Craig Calhoun, The Rise and Domestication of Historical Sociology," Terrence J. McDonald (ed), **The Historic Turn in Human Sciences**, (Michigan: Michigan University Press, 1996), pp. 313-327.

³⁵ Craig Calhoun, "Afterword: Why Historical Sociology?," Gerald Delanty and Engin F. Sllin (eds), **Handbook of Historical Sociology**, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 389.

³⁶ Joseph Femia, "Gramsci, Machiavelli and International Relations," **The Political Quarterly**, Vol. 76, Issue 3, 2005, p. 345.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 347.

Femia's theory on political power along with Cox's critical theory in an attempt to create an alternative analytical sociological paradigm focusing on social forces and power relations in the making of Fiji history.

This thesis also has a progressive dimension in seeking alternative possibilities embedded in the historical approach and this sense approximates Robert Cox's formulation of critical theory, which operationalises historical context with a view to transform social relations. According to Cox, "social and political theory is history bound at its origin, since it is always traceable to a historically conditioned awareness of certain problems and issues."³⁸ Social theory attempts to transcend the particularity of its historical origins in order to place them within the framework of general propositions. Cox conceptualises social theory as critical theory and as a theory of history "concerned not just with the past but with the continuing process of historical change."³⁹ Critical theory can be a guide to strategic action for bringing about an alternative order and Cox proposes historical structure consisting of three inter-related social categories: material capabilities, ideas and institutions and these can be utilised to the study of the state-society complexes.

Building on Cox's critical theory and on Femia's concept of power, this thesis draws on the work of neo-Gramscian scholars since the 1980s to analyse the role of ethnicity and culture in shaping political hegemony, anti-hegemony and

³⁸ Robert Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," **Millennium: Journal of International Relations**, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1981, p. 128-129.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 129.

counter-hegemony in colonial and post-colonial Fiji. The neo-Gramscian themes compliment the neo-Gramscian model of hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony by providing the conceptual linkages among the model, the themes and historical analysis.

The thesis uses primary, official, archival and secondary materials to establish an alternative reading of Fiji history. Chapters 1 and 2 are based on secondary sources and Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 are based on primary, official as well as secondary sources. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 are based on secondary materials including news clippings.

The Thesis Structure

The thesis is divided up into two parts. The first part establishes a neo-Gramscian analytical framework for the study of Fiji. It outlines various analytical themes used by Fiji analysts to study economic dependency, ethnicity, culture, resistance, power, class and political formations. The second part applies the neo-Gramscian framework to Fiji's political history from 1854 to 2007 and explains the cycles of political hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony in Fiji. It argues that the cultural hegemony of the chiefs in colonial Fiji was transformed into the political hegemony in post-colonial Fiji from 1970 to 2006. However, post-colonial Fiji went through two cycles (1970-1987 and 1992-2006) of chiefly political hegemony (1970-1987), factionalisation of the indigenous bloc (1975, 1982, 1987, and 1999), inter-

ethnic alliances (1987 and 1999) and the assertion of indigenous coercive hegemony (1987, 2000 and 2006). I further argue that this pattern was broken in 2006 by the Fiji military forces commander, Frank Bainimarama, who overthrew the indigenous political bloc in a coup and implemented policies to de-ethnicise Fiji politics. However, indigenous groups remained opposed to the coercive military hegemony and members of the deposed government, the Methodist Church of Fiji and members of the Great Council of Chiefs challenged the military raising the possibility of the continuation of the hegemonic cycle.

Under the sub-heading; Social Theory in Perspective, Chapter 1 looks at different Schools of development theories, which originated in the 1960s and greatly influenced the study of Fiji. Economic under-development of many decolonised nations became a subject of academic debate, especially after end of World War II. The Dependency School was a response to the Modernisation theory, which super-imposed the economic experiences of the European powers on to developing nations by arguing that all societies went through similar stages of development. In response, the Dependency School of André Gunder Frank demonstrated that there was transfer of surplus from developing countries to the developed ones and as a result, there was under-development in the developing countries. The most important formulation of Frank was the core and the periphery, both locked in an unequal and exploitative economic relationship. The World System School of Immanuel Wallerstein expanded on the core and the periphery concepts and introduced the semi-periphery, which

effectively adopted a mix of import substitution and export led strategies to move from economic dependence to semi-economic independence. The World System School analysed global capitalism and argued that the inner logic of capital shaped the inter-state system and determined whether geographic regions became affluent or remained economically backward.

The neo-Gramscian School in the 1970s criticised the economism of the Dependency and the World System Schools and revisited the work of Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci and developed theoretical frameworks for the study of power, ideology and institutions. In 1987, Robert Cox, an academic at York University, moved the dependency and development debate to the next level. Cox used Antonio Gramsci's theory and applied it to the global political economy by arguing that international capital had created economic peripheries inside hegemonic states by establishing special export processing zones with the aid of unregulated workers. Cox argued that there is global hegemony of capital, which is sustained by hegemonic states through transnational alliances of interest known as the international historic bloc. Analysing the relationship between transnational capital, hegemonic states, and international historic blocs provided a new social ontology to the neo-Gramscian School. However, none of the Schools, the Dependency, the World System, Gramscian and neo-Gramscian IPE Schools directly addressed the role of ethnicity and culture in shaping political discourses within nation states, even though issues of ethnicity and culture were recognised by the neo-Gramscian IPE School as key elements in the exercise of political power. Such issues are addressed, though, in an effort to adopt a neo-Gramscian model to colonial and post-colonial

contexts.

I utilise the theoretical framework established by recent neo-Gramscian scholars analysing post-colonial societies, John Girling, Nicola Pratt and Ahmet Oncu, to develop three inter-related themes for the study of Fijian hegemony. The first theme is based on Girling's conceptualisation of colonial culture in Thailand and its role in shaping post-colonial political and social discourses. The second theme is developed using Nicola Pratt's analysis of the post-colonial Egyptian state. Pratt argues that culture, sub-culture and ethnicity shape political hegemony and counter-hegemony in Egypt. The third theme is developed using Ahmet Oncu's analysis of the Turkish state where the military formed strategic alliances with the civil society and transformed itself from an ethnicised entity into a counter-hegemonic political force. These three themes: the role of colonial culture, the importance of ethnicity in colonial and post-colonial hegemonies and the changing role of the military are developed in the rest of the thesis.

Chapter 2 traces the work of Fiji theorists, who integrated Dependency, World System, class and Revisionist analysis into their study of Fiji. The Chapter concludes by outlining some key recent investigations deploying culture and ethnic categories to understand shifting hegemonies in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial contexts. These key recent texts underpin the three-part analytical framework. Recently, I.C. Campbell explored the nature, causes and significance of the Samoan protest including status rivalry between chiefs.

Campbell's integration of ethnicity and culture in the study of Samoan resistance resonates with my theme of ethnicity and culture shaping political hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony. Likewise, the thesis of Robert Nicole charts resistance against the cultural hegemony of the chiefs and the colonial government and provides an important alternative reading of Fiji history. In doing so, Nicole lends support to the theme of divisions within the colonial historic bloc and anti-hegemonic challenges from indigenous sub-cultural groups.

Using a neo-Gramscian analytical framework, I argue that the colonial historic bloc, established under the political hegemony of the colonial regime and the cultural hegemony of the indigenous chiefs via the Council of Chiefs, was threatened by both internal and external influences and divisions. Winston Halapua in 2003 analysed the relationship between the indigenous polity, religion and militarism and his approach is reflected in my third theme that the military in Fiji has changed from an ethnicist institution to an agent of social and political change. Since the 2006 coup, the military has re-ordered the indigenous society and restructured the relationship between the military, the church and the indigenous polity under the leadership of the military commander Commodore Frank Bainimarama. The thesis introduces new analytical themes that have not been integrated before in the analysis of Fiji. There have been a number of studies of Fiji politics that focuses on ethnicity and these are outlined in Chapter 2. Recent growth of post-subaltern studies

enabled Sudesh Mishra⁴⁰, Vijay Mishra⁴¹ and Subramani⁴² to analyse racial discourse and popular myths as a diasporic imaginary. Moreover Subramani narrates the events of 1987 as a situational comedy. Alumita Durutalo also provides an alternative analysis of contemporary conflict and tensions in Fiji as competition for power, which emerged as part of the colonial legacy in Fiji.⁴³ In the same Revisionist tradition, the thesis probes neo-Gramscian theory, explicitly drawing on and conceptualising hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial contexts.

Chapter 3 begins the historical analysis of Fiji and applies the themes of cultural and ethnic divisions within the colonial historic bloc, including the origins of chiefly hegemony. Under the subheading: Pre-Cession Fiji, I outline the history of Fiji prior to cession in 1874. Before cession, the Kingdom of Bau emerged as the most powerful polity in Fiji and its chief Ratu Seru Cakobau established a Bau-led historic bloc in 1871 with the support of the Europeans. However, there were divisions, conflict and tensions within the Bauan historic bloc resulting in the cession of Fiji to Britain, which modelled indirect rule in Fiji along the cultural experience of Bau. The history after cession is detailed under the sub-heading: Colonial Fiji. A Council of Chiefs was established as the cultural hegemony of the chiefs was affirmed within the colonial historic bloc.

⁴⁰ Sudesh Mishra, "Haunted Lines: post-colonial theory and genealogy of racial formations in Fiji," **Meanjin**, Vol. 52, No.4, 1993, pp. 623-634.

⁴¹ Vijay Mishra, **Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorising the Diasporic Imaginary**, (London: Routledge, 2007).

⁴² Subramani, **Dauka Pura**, (New Delhi: Star Publication Pty Ltd, 2001).

⁴³ Alumita Durutalo, "Melanesia in review: Issues and Events, 2005," in **The Contemporary Pacific**, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2006, p. 396.

Nevertheless, as during the Bau-led historic bloc, the colonial historic bloc faced challenges from within as various Governors of the Colony questioned the cultural hegemony of the chiefs, and the European community of Fiji sought to increase its influence as an ethnic bloc by recommending annexation with New Zealand. There were also external challenges to the cultural hegemony of the chiefs from anti-hegemonic sub-cultural movements.

Chapter 4 looks at the political history of the Hill Tribes, the Tuka, the Luveniwei, the Nawai and the Bula Tale indigenous sub-cultural movements in colonial Fiji within the theme of external threats to the colonial historic bloc under the sub-heading Anti-Hegemonic Movements. By advocating alternative visions, ideas and cultures, these movements in the late nineteenth century challenged the colonial historic bloc. In response, the colonial administration banned these movements and banished their leaders. The indigenous anti-hegemonic movements were not only syncretic and messianic, but were more appropriately counter-colonial⁴⁴ since they challenged the institutional and ideological foundations of the established authority and survived underground. After World War II, the indigenous chiefs and the colonial administration started aggressively to promote cultural and ethnic alliance between the chiefs and the Europeans, positioning the indigenous chiefs to take over political hegemony from the colonial authorities.

Chapter 5 analyses the formation of cultural and ethnic political blocs and the

⁴⁴Roger Keesing, "Colonial and Countercolonial Discourse in Melanesia," **Critique of Anthropology**, Volume 14, No.1, 1994, pp. 41-58.

alliance between the indigenous chiefs and the Europeans. Both communities fully participated in the war effort and to an extent shared common cultural interests. By the late 1940s, a number of commoner indigenous Fijians had expressed their desire to fight for chiefly hegemony. There was a tacit agreement within the indigenous Fijian community that the Council of Chiefs should intervene against the alienation of indigenous land and procurement of indigenous labour to enable survival of indigenous Fijian culture. Moreover, the indigenous Fijians also believed that the Council of Chiefs was the only institution to keep in check the political aspirations of Indo-Fijians, who had become a majority in the Colony by 1946. The indigenous chiefs together with the colonial government and the European community thus established an ethnic and cultural bloc after the War against Indo-Fijians, who had begun to challenge the colonial historic bloc and in particular the CSR after the end of indenture in 1920.

Indo-Fijian resistance to the colonial authorities is outlined under the sub-heading: Indo-Fijian Resistance. There was, however, in 1959 a move among unions to form an inter-ethnic class alliance and fracture the European-chief ethnic/cultural bloc but this was defeated by the intervention of indigenous chiefs. By the 1960s, rival political blocs based on ethnicity were established with the formation of the Indo-Fijian National Federation Party and the indigenous Fijian Alliance Party. These are discussed under the sub-heading: The Emergence of Rival Ethnic Political Blocs. The cultural hegemony of the chiefs was transformed into a political hegemony following the re-interpretation

of the Deed of Cession by the colonial government and the indigenous chiefs in preparation for independence in 1970.

Chapter 6 analyses the influences of ethnicity and culture in entrenching the political hegemony of the chiefs after independence under the sub-heading: Political Hegemony: 1970-1977, and looks at new anti-hegemonic movements in the form of the Fijian Nationalist Party led by Sakeasi Butadroka in 1975 under the sub-heading: Hegemony Destabilised: 1977-1987. The nationalists in April 1977 fractured indigenous Fijian votes and allowed the Indo-Fijian National Federation Party to win government. However, internal differences and lack of leadership in the Indo-Fijian camp prompted indigenous chiefly intervention which restored the political hegemony of the chiefs under the Alliance Party. The indigenous chiefs were once again challenged by a more popular inter-ethnic class-based movement, led by the Fiji Labour Party leader Dr. Timoci Bavadra, who came to power as a result of an alliance between indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian working classes. The indigenous chiefs and nationalist elements of the indigenous Fijian community refused to accept the multiethnic coalition government that came to power after April 1987 election and embarked on a political destabilisation campaign.

Chapter 7 looks at the political transformations from 1987 to 1999 under the sub-heading: From Political Hegemony to Coercive Hegemony: 1987-1999. In May 1987, the military intervened and re-asserted chiefly political hegemony with force, which continued unchallenged until the chiefs formed a political

party in 1990, exclusively to champion chiefly dominance under the guise of indigenous political paramountcy. A commoner indigenous Fijian Sitiveni Rabuka was voted to lead the chiefly Soqosoqo ni Vakevulewa ni Taukei party, which won the 1992 elections under a constitution that greatly elevated the political authority of the chiefs while diminishing the rights of Indo-Fijians. With political power effectively monopolised by the chiefs, differences started to emerge within the chief-led historic bloc as provincial chiefs engaged in struggles for a greater share of political influence in national affairs. The issue of indigenous factionalisation is discussed under the sub-heading: Indigenous factionalisation and Inter-Ethnic Collaboration. As a result of divisions and conflict among indigenous Fijians, the political hegemony of the chiefs started to collapse and indigenous political groups formed alliances with Indo-Fijians in 1999 to form a multiethnic government, led by an Indo-Fijian Prime Minister, Mahendra Chaudhry. After the elections, indigenous nationalists groups started agitations against the government, arguing loss of culture and political power under the 1997 Constitution.

Chapter 8 analyses the 2000 coup under the sub-heading: Coercive Indigenous Assertions Against Inter-Ethnic Collaboration, which again brought to surface indigenous chiefly rivalry. The divisions amongst the indigenous chiefs led to the militarisation of intra-indigenous cultural conflict as chiefs attempted to remove other chiefs from political power with force of arms. This Chapter develops on the theme of culture and ethnicity shaping both political hegemony and anti-hegemony/counter-hegemony by focussing on internal indigenous

struggles for political power. In 2000, the government of Indo-Fijian Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry was held hostage by a nationalist group led by George Speight for 56 days. At first the Speight group unsuccessfully attempted to oust the President of Fiji, Ratu Mara, who was also the high chief of the powerful Tovata confederacy. When the hostage crisis inside Fiji's parliament became a stalemate, the Speight group, through their supporters outside parliament, initiated racial attacks against rural Indo-Fijians.

Under the sub-heading: Political Hegemony Reinstated, I argue that there were divisions within the army and the interim-government, established by the military as a response to the coup, implemented policies along the lines advocated by the coup leaders. The Great Council of Chiefs which had in 1990 sponsored a political party was divided and failed to provide national leadership with some in the Council openly siding with the Speight group. Following a High Court judgment in 2001 in favour of the 1997 constitution, the chiefs withdrew their support for the Soqosoqo ni Vakevulewa ni Taukei party and silently lent their support to a new indigenous Fijian party, the Soqosoqo ni Duavata ni Lewenivanua party, which was led by another indigenous Fijian commoner, Laisenia Qarase. The Chapter concludes by emphasising that divisions within indigenous Fijians were a direct result of ethnicisation of politics and intra-communal power struggles, which further politicised an indigenous-dominated military.

Chapter 9 looks at the tensions between the commander of the Fiji Military Forces Frank Bainimarama and the SDL government since the 2001 elections,

developing the theme of the military as a counter-hegemonic social force in Fiji under the sub-heading: Indigenous Fragmentation Revisited. Bainimarama, unlike Rabuka, sought action against the chiefs implicated in the 2000 coup. This failed and by 2006, the army wanted to end the political hegemony of the chiefs, backed by the Qarase government. In a series of public protests, the army ordered Laisenia Qarase to “clean up” his government because a number of chiefs in cabinet and in Senate were facing charges for their role in the 2000 coup. Qarase defied the army and initiated the Racial Tolerance and Unity Bill, which provided amnesty to the coup conspirators. At the end of 2006, the Qarase government was overthrown in a military coup. The 2006 coup is analysed under the sub-heading: Military Intervention of a New Kind. After the coup, commander Bainimarama was installed as the interim prime minister of Fiji and initiated a “clean up” against the Native Land Trust Board and the Great Council of Chiefs, which was suspended after nearly 132 years of formal existence. Bainimarama’s coup against the chiefs was unlike any other counter-hegemonic force in Fiji. The military was used to overthrow not just the government but the chiefly order that was firmly embedded in the indigenous Fijian society.

In summary, the first Chapter establishes a neo-Gramscian analytical framework for the thesis around the following themes: first conflict and divisions within the colonial historic bloc, second the role of culture and ethnicity in shaping political hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony, and third the changing role of the army in the cycle of post-colonial hegemony. The

second Chapter surveys Fiji historiography and the use of political theory to analyse class, ethnicity, race, political power and social forces in Fiji. The third Chapter looks at divisions within the colonial historic bloc in particular ethnic divisions between indigenous chiefs and the Europeans and opposition to the cultural hegemony of the chiefs by some colonial Governors. The theme of divisions and challenges to the colonial historic bloc continues in the fourth Chapter with the emergence of indigenous anti-hegemonic sub-cultural movements followed by the establishment of indigenous Fijian political hegemony outlined in the fifth Chapter. Analysis of post-independence divisions and conflict under the chief-led historic bloc continue in the sixth and seventh Chapters. The events of 2000 with the militarisation of divisions within the indigenous polity is analysed in the eighth Chapter and in the final Chapter the role of the military as an agent for social and political change under the leadership of the Fiji military commander Commodore Frank Bainimarama is outlined.

In the next Chapter, I will develop the analytical themes for the analysis of Fiji politics using the neo-Gramscian theory.

PART 1

CHAPTER 1

THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This Chapter evaluates in detail Modernisation, Dependency, neo-Dependency, World System, neo-Gramscian international political-economy (IPE) and neo-Gramscian culture and ethnicity approaches because it leads to an analytical framework for the thesis and forms a necessary background for the political history of Fiji analysed from Chapter 3. Dependency and the World System Schools, in particular, influenced colonial and post-colonial analysis as well as the study of class formations, unequal development, political domination of indigenous chiefs, and ethnic conflict in Fiji. These theoretical approaches to Fiji are defined against the Modernisation theory.

Following the end of World War II, there emerged a number of social theories that examined political, social and economic relations of the post-war world order. The focus, in particular, was on the developing countries, which were de-colonised after the end of World War II. The competition for overseas territories was one of the causes of the two great wars in Europe and after gaining independence, the newly independent states provided raw materials for the development of former colonial powers. In the 1960s, orthodox academic literature on economic development based on the social Darwinian uni-linear modernisation theory⁴⁵ was challenged by Revisionist scholars, who asserted

⁴⁵Walt Rostow, **The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist**

that the development of European states had caused the under-development of their former colonies. Modernisation theory was europa-centric and was based on the assumption that all societies went through similar stages of economic growth and developing nations needed to better emulate the innovations of the advanced nations.

Modernisation theory was popularised by W.W. Rostow, who argued that all communities went through similar stages of development and that developing and under-developed states needed to imitate the affluent economies of the European nations. The Modernisation theory influenced the work of the Economic Commission of Latin America but the europa-centric model of development failed to deliver economic progress in a region, characterised before the end of the Cold War by violent ethnic conflict, military intervention, death squads, elite rule and oppression of workers, peasants and indigenous groups. The Dependency School was a response to Modernisation theory and Dependency theorists argued that the advanced industrialised economies of the west were directly responsible for the under-development of the developing nations. While the Dependency School focused on unequal economic exchange, it did not emphasise the internal structures that distorted development. The neo-Dependency School expanded the under-development thesis and demonstrated that through the re-alignment of domestic economic structures, there can be dependent development. However, both Dependency and the neo-Dependency Schools were focused entirely on external and

Manifesto, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

internal economic relations and did not address the role of culture and ethnicity in economic under-development.

In the early 1970s, Immanuel Wallerstein extended the dependency and under-development debate by focusing on hierarchies within the capitalist system and introduced a third economic category. According to Wallerstein, there are possibilities for the emergence of a semi-periphery within the existing capitalist world system via import-substitution and export-led growth. Like the Dependency and the neo-Dependency Schools, the World System School focused its attention on the capitalist world system but did not address the colonial and post-colonial contexts of developing states. The neo-Gramscian School in contrast built on the work of Antonio Gramsci to challenge the economism of the Dependency, the neo-Dependency and the World System Schools by arguing that cultural formations as well as dominant classes were largely responsible for the exploitation of masses in developing nations. The neo-Gramscian School of IPE started to evaluate the role of transnational capitalist classes in controlling the global political economy, however, the neo-Gramscian IPE School remained predominantly focused on international economic relations and the global logic of capital, despite successfully integrating both the domestic and the international by providing transnational analytical categories, such as international historic blocs, transnational classes and the structural power of international capital.

The neo-Gramscian scholars analysing colonial and post-colonial societies, in

particular after the 1980s, integrated culture and ethnicity into their neo-Gramscian analytical framework and showed how these played a significant role in shaping political hegemony and counter-hegemony. I will outline each School of thought in detail and explain their weaknesses and further argue that the neo-Gramscian School has developed theoretical tools that allow social theorists to examine critically ethno-cultural hegemony in colonial and post-colonial contexts, ethno-cultural divisions in historic blocs and the role of military in hegemony and counter-hegemony.

Social Theory in Perspective

Modernisation Theory

The Economic Commission of Latin American (ECLA), headed by Raul Prebisch, traced the problem of development in Latin America and proposed an alternative method of economic development based on the principles of Modernisation theory. According to Prebisch:

The idea of placing the emphasis on agriculture and playing little attention to industry is dying hard. The industry group needs to develop much more intensively than before in order to fulfil one of its principal dynamic functions, as well as to provide the manufactured goods required for speeding up development.⁴⁶

⁴⁶Raul Prebisch, **Change and Development - Latin America's Great Task**, (London: Praeger Publishers, 1971), p. 6.

The Economic Commission was overly concerned with the industrial structure and in concluding its research, the Commission proposed a "large scale contribution of financial resources from abroad to stimulate the rapid expansion of the economy through the utilisation of idle inefficiently used resources."⁴⁷ Fernando Henrique Cardoso, a Latin American development economist, outlined the ECLA development policies as involving industrialisation and healthy protectionism; adequate foreign currency allocation policy; programming of import substitution; and a desire to avoid cutting wages in the process of industrialisation and to avoid a reduction in the masses' capacity to consume.⁴⁸ The ECLA failed to realise that Latin America had a small market in comparison to its North American counterpart, and the most important factor was the weakness of competition, which was largely due to many colonised states having a mono-export economy. The implementation of import substituted industrialisation failed to develop Latin America and as Alschular notes:

The ECLA strategy of import substituted industrialisation, undertaken in the 50s and 60s, has cast a long shadow. Little evidence can be found for a fundamental transformation of the international economic order in Latin America, rather, one finds a variety of structural problems (unequal exchange, industrial concentration, decapitalisation, disarticulation and

⁴⁷Ibid, p. 15.

⁴⁸Fernando Henrique Cardoso, "The Originality of the Copy: The Economic Commission of Latin America and Idea of Development," in Heraldo Munoz (ed), **Towards a New Strategy for Development**, (Oxford: Permagon Press, 1979), p. 63.

marginalisation) which largely describe dependency.⁴⁹

The ECLA also failed to account for the vested interests of peripheral elites, whose powers were founded upon their privileged relations with the powerful centre. Alschular points out that the ECLA failed to understand clientelism, which distorted national economy, bred corrupt national bourgeoisie and above all entrenched elitism. According to Alschular, "clientelist classes have come to include the state bureaucracy, and certain sectors of the middle class whose interests and privileges are derived from their ties to foreign interests."⁵⁰ The failure of the ECLA strategy was largely due to the assumption by economists that economic progress went along clearly defined stages of development, a concept which had its origins in the Modernisation theory. One of the prominent Modernisation theorists, W. W. Rostow, elaborated on the stages of economic Growth. His concept was further developed by monetary economist, Milton Friedman, who was a leading authority behind the Chilean economic miracle in the 1960s. According to Rostow, all countries go through five stages of growth:

1. The Traditional Society;
2. The Pre-conditions for Take-off;
3. The Take-off;
4. The Drive to Maturity;
5. The Age of High Mass Consumption.

⁴⁹Lawrence R. Alschular, **Predicting Development, Dependency and Conflict in Latin America**, (Canada: University of Ottawa Press, 1978), p. 9.

⁵⁰Ibid, p. 180.

The Traditional Society is one where there is limited production functions and there is little mechanisation. In the pre-condition stage, societies are in a state of economic transition and acquired necessary collective skills for technological and economic advancement by exploiting the fruits of modern science.⁵¹

According to Modernisation theorists, the problem with Latin America was that the region's strategy for growth failed somewhere between the Pre-conditions for the Take-off and the Take-off stages. In fact, the Modernisation theory assumed that the economic development process that took place in Europe would inevitably take place in Latin America and elsewhere in the developing world. Since Modernisation theory was based on an ahistorical model, it did not take into consideration the colonial history or culture of Latin America or other developing countries.

Bjorn Hettne of the Swedish Institute for Development provided a comprehensive analysis of Modernisation theory and argued that development is a spontaneous, irreversible process inherent in every single society; development implies structural differentiation and functional specialisation; the process of development can be divided into distinct stages showing the level of development achieved by each society; development can be stimulated by external competition or military threat.⁵² The uni-linear Modernisation model failed to develop Latin America as social theorists started to question the

⁵¹W. W. Rostow, **The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto**, p. 7.

⁵²Bjorn Hettne and Matts Friberg (eds), "The Greening of the World-Towards a Non-Deterministic Model of Global Process" in **Development and Social Transformation: Reflections on the Global Problematique**, (Great Britain: The Chaucer Press, 1985), p. 210.

usefulness of a theory developed around the experience of industrial powers and one that blamed local culture for economic failures. One of the challenges to the Modernisation theory came from the Dependency School, which used Marxist concept of surplus value to analyse economic under-development.

The Dependency School

Dependency theory, while being critical of Modernisation and ECLA ideas, advocated a new approach to Latin American development studies. The new approach was based on metropolis-satellite polarisation. Development theorist, Andre Gunder Frank emphasised the role played by metropolitan capital in under-developing Latin America. According to Frank, "the metropolis expropriates economic surplus from its satellites and appropriates it for its own economic development. The satellites remain underdeveloped due to a lack of access to their own surplus."⁵³ Essentially, Frank focused on the colonial history of Latin America and concluded that colonial powers, driven by the motive to acquire raw materials, stripped resources from the colonies and appropriated it to Europe. With the continuation of this cycle of expropriation and appropriation of resources, the colonies, overtime, became economically under-developed. Frank looked at Brazil and Chile and did a historical analysis of colonial capitalist penetration in those countries. According to Frank, the primary reason that motivated Spain and Portugal to colonise Latin America was gold and sugar and "the capitalist metropolis-satellite relationship between

⁵³ Andre Gunder Frank, **Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America**, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967), p.9.

Europe and Latin America was established by force of arms."⁵⁴

Arms were at first used by the colonial powers to subdue indigenous groups in Latin America, and after the departure of both Spain and Portugal, local elites used arms to secure themselves in power. In addition regional hegemonic nations in the Americas, in particular the US, continuously intervened in Latin American affairs, starting in the late nineteenth century, to protect its geo-political interest. Most importantly, the United States saw Latin America as its backyard and as such incorporated it within its political sphere of influence. In conceptualising the metropolitan centre, it is important to look at not only the metropolitan states-Spain, Portugal, Britain, Belgium, Netherlands, France, Germany, Russia and Japan - but also the culture and institutions of these states that were imposed on the colonised population.

For Frank, the under-development and total dependency of the periphery is produced by capitalism: "capitalism produces a developing metropolis and an under-developing periphery, and its periphery-in turn characterised by metropolis-satellite within it-is condemned to a stultified or un-developed economic development among its domestic peripheral satellite regions and sectors."⁵⁵ While Frank emphasised the "external" factor as playing a major role in under-development, other Dependency theorists focused on imperialism, Multinational Companies and local elites. According to Celso Furtado, "the phenomenon of under-development occurs in a number of forms and in various

⁵⁴Ibid, p.21.

⁵⁵Ibid, p. 53.

stages. The simplest case is that of the co-existence of foreign companies producing export commodities alongside a wide range of subsistence activities."⁵⁶ The most glaring example of a foreign company in total control of the domestic economy is the penetration of the US-based United Fruit Company (UFC) in Latin America before World War II. According to Celso Furtado:

The hegemony which the U.S. exercises in Latin America constitutes a serious obstacle to development of the countries in the region, since it inordinately reinforces anachronistic power structures. The "foreign aid strategy" of the United States government, which creates privileges for large corporations and which exercises preventive control of "subversion", contributes to the preservation of the most retrograde means of social organisation.⁵⁷

U.S. hegemony in Latin America is seen by Dependency theorists as a continuation of imperialism. Similar to the argument forwarded by Frank, Chilcote states that: "imperialism has dominated Latin America from the extraction of gold and silver through to the penetration of commercial capital and later financial and manufacturing capital. The most significant result of the colonial heritage is not a system of values or cultural orientations but

⁵⁶Furtado quoted in Henry Bernstein editor, **Underdevelopment and Development**, (England: Penguin Books LTD, 1973), p. 134.

⁵⁷Celso Furtado, **Obstacles to Development in Latin America**, (New York: Doubleday and Company Inc., 1970), p.65.

economies shaped by the needs of the centre of the expanding system."⁵⁸

Paul Baran,⁵⁹ in his "Political Economy of Growth", argues that imperialism maintains a state of backwardness by reinforcing stagnant social and economic structures as well as conservative social classes. For the Dependistas, expropriation and appropriation of economic surplus, U.S. hegemony, imperialism, and the center-periphery polarisation were the factors that caused the under-development of Latin America. In fact, the central theme of Dependency School was the "external economic factor" as an explanation for internal relations of domination and economic dependency. It was metropolitan powers and their economic policies that had caused the development of under-development in developing countries. Economic relations that existed between the core and the periphery were in favour of hegemonic powers. Such being the case, it became imperative to understand the history of colonised people to understand the degree of under-development in colonised societies.

The neo-Dependency School

The Dependency School took a dramatic turn when Cardoso and Faletto used "structural-historical"⁶⁰ methodology and critically looked at both "external" and "internal" factors that caused under-development in Latin America. After

⁵⁸Ronald H. Chilcote and Joel C. Edelstein, **Latin America: Capitalist and Socialist Perspectives of Development and Underdevelopment**, (London: Westview Press, 1986), p.20.

⁵⁹Paul A. Baran, **The Political Economy of Growth**, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1957).

⁶⁰Fernando Henrique Cardoso, **Dependency and Development in Latin America**, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 61-75.

carefully analysing the development of socio-political structures in Latin America, Cardoso and Faletto concluded that there could be "dependent development." The idea of dependent development ran contrary to the arguments of the Dependency theorists. The Dependency approach was that "development required profound alterations of economic, social and political relationships."⁶¹ In order for any meaningful development to occur, there had to be an end to foreign capitalist domination and a creation of a socialist context of development. The dependent development model primarily sought to explain limited development in some instances and anticipated that existing obscurantist economic systems, characterised by monopoly and dependence on primary commodities, could be reformed. This idea of change from within a system was basically an academic exercise, because it failed to take into consideration the bureaucratic-authoritarian state structures, sustained by the local elite upon which ethno-cultural divisions in post-colonial societies were based.

The debate within the neo-Dependency School led to the emergence of neo-Marxist and structural dependency theories. The neo-Marxists, borrowing heavily from Cuban and Chinese experiences, advocated revolutionary armed struggle for socialism, whereas the structuralists argued that "those sectors of the industrial, middle and working class which were integrated into the dependent transnational corporate system would not favour reforms which will

⁶¹Chilcote and Edelstein, Latin America: Capitalist and Socialist Perspectives of Development and Underdevelopment, p. 21.

eventually liberate the masses from dependency."⁶² For the neo-Marxists, land reform and the oppression of peasants became major protest themes. Armed struggle by the oppressed groups was the avenue through which social justice could be achieved. It was agreed that under the existing social and political system, the elite had both the monopoly on power and terror and the latter made possible by a co-opted and a highly politicised armed forces. The dominant elite system, sustained by patrimonialism and clientelism, was referred to as "internal colonialism."⁶³ In addition, the economic structure in developing countries was distorted by the local elite, who were serving the interests of the metropolitan states. It was argued that the local elite had introduced cash cropping in satellite states and distorted local markets, making it subservient to international price fluctuations. In fact, disruptions to the local production structure aided in the influx of foreign goods and created "structural-dependency."⁶⁴ The institutional and economic structures of the periphery were determined by the investment capital from the core states and the structural-dependency was sustained by the elite system of alliances, which was transnational in nature.

Overall, the Dependency and the neo-Dependency variant provided new perspectives on the study of development and under-development. While the

⁶²Kay Cristobal, **Latin America Theories of Development and Underdevelopment**, (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 19.

⁶³Rodolfo Stavenhagen, **Between Underdevelopment and Revolution in Latin America**, (New Delhi: Abhinav, 1981), pp. 35-42.

⁶⁴Heraldo Munoz (ed), **From Dependency to Development: Strategies to Overcome Underdevelopment and Unequality**, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1981), pp. 72-80.

above theories were entirely premised upon economic history, they never addressed the ethno-cultural aspects of elite domination in post-colonial societies where hegemonic social groups monopolised political power and perpetuated cultural and ethnic divisions. The World System School extended the dependency debate but remained focused on the hierarchies of the world capitalist system. However, the World System introduced a new category of semi-periphery, which was a stage of economic development between the core and the periphery.

The World System School

The World System School had its origins in the Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economics. Braudel, the founder of the School, sought to develop "total history": a holistic approach in the field of social science that influenced Immanuel Wallerstein. Wallerstein saw the World System as a capitalist one.

The genesis of capitalism is located in the late fifteenth century Europe, that the system expanded in space over time to cover the entire globe by the late nineteenth century, and that it still covers today the entire globe.⁶⁵

The World System School criticised the Dependency School for emphasising only the economic relations between the core and the periphery, while failing to

⁶⁵Immanuel Wallerstein, **Historical Capitalism**, (Norfolk: Thetford Press, 1983), p. 19.

explain fully the role of state hierarchy. For the World System, the Dependency School never analysed the capitalist system and its global dimension. In response to the Dependency bi-modal centre-periphery approach, the World System School put forward a tri-modal analytical framework. Under this model, there were three fundamental characteristics of the World System: core, periphery and semi-periphery. The core was the centre of political, economic and social activity. According to Wallerstein:

The combined wealth, technological expertise, and the military power of the core continue to exceed those of the rest of the world. The core is still the location of the technologically advanced, capital intensive, and high wage production. The core retains its capitalist system of political economy and is still organised into system of competitive nation states.⁶⁶

In comparison to the core, the periphery experienced tremendous social, political and economic disorder because the peripheral regions of the world were under total dominance of the core states. Thomas Shannon notes that "although the former colonies became independent states, the resulting relationship between core and periphery, known as the 'neo-colonial system', was much the same as it had been before independence."⁶⁷ According to Shannon, the structures of domination and control continued in post-colonial states as local capitalist elites with links to global capital continued with the

⁶⁶Thomas Shannon, **An Introduction to the World System Perspective**, (London: Westview Press, 1989), p. 77.

⁶⁷Ibid, p. 85.

economic exploitation of their colonial predecessors. However, within the World System, there was an opportunity to move from dependence to semi-dependence and join the semi-periphery, which emerged due to the rapid development of manufacturing activities in the Newly Industrialised Countries (NICs). Shannon highlights that "the most successful states in the semi-periphery, the Newly Industrialised Countries (NICs) have enjoyed economic growth rates higher than any other group of countries in the World Economy. The NIC's were Brazil, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Mexico before its economic difficulties of the 80s."⁶⁸ The emergence of the NICs presents a serious challenge to the Dependency theory, but according to Hettne the NIC's success was a matter of correct timing in switching from one development strategy to another. The development strategy was consistent and based on a certain degree of national cohesion, and finally the strategy considered both internal and external constraints as well as opportunities.⁶⁹

In the World System perspective, the process of under-development started with the incorporation of the particular external area into the World System. As the World System expanded, first Eastern Europe, then Latin America, Asia, Africa and Pacific, in that order were peripheralised.⁷⁰ The World System, as stated earlier, is a capitalist one. This capitalist world system is dynamic and "it develops itself through circular trends of incorporation, commercialisation of

⁶⁸Ibid, p. 101.

⁶⁹Bjorn Hettne, **Globalisation of Dependency Theory**, Institute for the World Economics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Studies on Developing Countries, Series No. 130, (Budapest, 1990), p. 13.

⁷⁰Ibid, p.16.

agriculture, industrialisation, and proletarianisation."⁷¹ The World System School has similarities and differences with its Dependency counterpart. Like the Dependistas, Wallerstein described the World System as capitalist. However, he does not make the distinction between development and under-development, or central or peripheral capitalism. Thus, there is only one kind of capitalism, namely that of the World System.⁷² The World System theory points out that continued integration into the world economy does not leave peripheral societies in a permanent peripheral state. The World System theorists argue that there is mobility to move from periphery to semi-periphery and from semi-periphery to core. Wallerstein, thus, states that the World System School challenges the "europo-centric constructions of social reality"⁷³ and takes a dialectical approach to the study of world capitalism.

Dependency and the World System Schools share a critical perspective on the global capitalist system, and both propose transformation into a socialist world government. However, the Dependency School emphasises unequal exchange as the cause for economic under-development whereas the World System theory argues uneven development and internal colonialism was a result of global capitalism. Neither conceptual frameworks, the Dependency and the World System, takes into the consideration the cultural and ethnic dynamics that shape international economic relations and influence colonial and post-

⁷¹ Alvin Y. So, **Social Change and Development**, (London: Sage Publications INC., 1990), p. 197.

⁷² Bjorn Hettne, **Globalisation of Dependency Theory**, p. 16.

⁷³ Immanuel Wallerstein, **World Inequality**, (Quebec: Blackrose Books LTD, 1975), p. 17.

colonial contexts. Ethnic and cultural factors in colonial and post-colonial societies played a significant role in shaping state formations and determining the allocation of economic resources. Moreover, issues of power, institutions and ideology of dominant classes were addressed by neo-Gramscian scholars who saw the Dependency and the World System Schools as economistic, overly concerned with the macro-analysis of economic under-development.

The Gramscian Revival

Kees Van der Pijl notes that between 1991 and 2004, there were some 386 academic papers written using Gramsci's ideas and as a result the "application of Gramsci's ideas is no longer confined to Italian studies and political philosophy, but runs across the social sciences."⁷⁴ Questions about power and the role of the ruling classes in determining development and under-development led many Marxist theoreticians to re-analyse the work of Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci who critically looked at the concepts of "culture" and "education," which were inter-connected in a psycho-physical nexus. In such an interwoven context, Gramsci defended cultural logic and critical thinking and re-theorised culture.

Culture is something quite different. It is organisation, discipline of one's inner self, a coming of terms with one's own personality; it is attainment

⁷⁴ Kees Van der Pijl, "Gramsci and Left Managerialism," **Critical review of International Social and Political Philosophy**, Vol. 8, No. 4, 2005, p. 508-509.

of higher awareness, with the aid of which one succeeds in understanding one's historical value, one's own function in life, one's own rights and obligations.⁷⁵

The role played by education and culture in ideological formations were important in understanding the "sphere of the complex superstructure." What Gramsci was doing was moving away from the economism of Marx and basing his ideas on the philosophy of European dialecticalism. In his conceptualisation of structure and superstructure, Gramsci theorised that men acquired consciousness of structural conflicts on the level of ideologies. From this, he argued that the theoretical-ideological principles of hegemony had epistemological significance. In Gramscian terms, "the realisation of a hegemonic apparatus determines a reform of consciousness and of methods of knowledge."⁷⁶

Hegemony

Hegemony in the Gramscian sense means dominance sustained by the establishment of a historic-bloc where a number of social forces converge (mostly elite) to secure and facilitate common interests. In fact, hegemony is based on ideological and state power which includes paramilitary, mercenary, police or military units; economic ideology; and politico-ethical realm where

⁷⁵ David Forgacs (ed), **An Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916-1935**, (New York: Schocken Books, 1988), p.57.

⁷⁶ Louis Marks (ed), **Opere di Antonio Gramsci, Vol. 1-6**, (Turin: Einaudi Press, 1957).

state propaganda is disseminated to achieve civil consensus. Hegemony is not purely physical dominance, but also ideological, institutional and cultural dominance and control. In the Gramscian sense, hegemony is achieved by popularising, institutionalising and legalising the ideas of the dominant group or classes. The ideology of the dominant classes is utilised to minimise conflict among the disparate groups within the civil society. However, the ideological hegemony is based on the success of propaganda which acts as a catalyst to crystallise opinions of the masses. In the Gramscian thought, the distinction between consent and coercion disappears over time along with the differences between civil and political hegemony.

In order for a successful hegemony to exist, there has to be an equally successful historic-bloc. This bloc basically is the state or the ruling group which is able to maintain itself in power through institutionalisation of certain ideas and beliefs.

Historic-bloc

The concept of the historic-bloc emanates from Croce's philosophy of the praxis⁷⁷ which is to detach the structure from the superstructure. For Gramsci, the historic-bloc is historic-specific and reflects the ethico-political history of the

⁷⁷ Angelo A. De Gennaro, **The Philosophy of Benedetto Croce: An Introduction**, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968); Jack D' Amico, Dain A. Trafton and Massimo Verdicchio, **The Legacy of Benedetto Croce**, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); also see: Walter L. Adamson, "Benedetto Croce and the Death of Ideology," **The Journal of Modern History**, Vol. 55, No. 12, 1983, pp. 208-236.

state. Such a history is an arbitrary and mechanical hypostasis of the movement of hegemony, of political leadership, of consent in the life and activities of the state and the civil society. In the Gramscian sense, a historic-bloc has to be hegemonic, interpreted as a relationship between cultural and ideological influence. Here Gramsci draws upon his mentor Croce who drew attention to the facts of culture and thought in the development of history. To maintain its hegemonic structure, a historic-bloc is led by organic intellectuals, who play a crucial role in the lives of both the civil society and the state. It is these intellectuals who are the official disseminators of ideology and propaganda. The organic relation between the state and the civil society and the contradictions emanating from them are arbitrated by intellectuals who reconcile oppositional and contradictory interests. For Gramsci, the survivability of a historic-bloc rests very much upon the skills of organic intellectuals. A historic-bloc is in crisis should it at any given point in time alienate the civil society. Such alienation will give rise to both "social and revolutionary consciousness" which in the Gramscian sense means counter-hegemony.

Counter-Hegemony

Counter-hegemony can only be fully realised within the context of the philosophy of praxis, which is basically a theory of contradictions, emerging from history and from a given historic-bloc. For Gramsci, the counter-hegemonic movement will be led by intellectuals, similar to a "vanguard", who will spread social consciousness among the populace. A successful counter-

hegemony is one that replaces the existing historic-bloc. This counter-hegemonic strategy is known as the "war of position": a strategy to form a cohesive bloc of social alliances to bring about constructive political change. In counter-hegemony, ideology plays a dominant role in constructing an alternative to the existing political order. In the Gramscian sense, ideology is identified as distinct from but also related to the structure and one that is used to organise human masses. The ideological basis of counter-hegemony forms an important nexus in the mobilisation of forces of change and transformation. Gramsci, however, also realised that not all change can be triggered through propaganda and ideology alone. In conceptualising the "war of Manoeuvre" and the "war of position", Gramsci appreciated the role of militaristic organisations in his "war of manoeuvre"- a military term used in relation to the first great war. The war of manoeuvre is a rapid movement of revolutionary forces, starting with the series of frontal assaults on the state. Such an action, according to Gramsci, was the nature of the Russian revolution of 1917. Lenin used the war of manoeuvre strategy to immobilise forces loyal to the Russian Czar. The war of position, however, is in contrast to the militaristic war of manoeuvre, and is linked to the Gramscian notion of hegemony, as an apparatus that involves "class alliances, ideological and political work in the civil society and consent."⁷⁸

The Gramscian war of position works within his conception of ideology, institution, historic-bloc, organic intellectuals, hegemony and counter-

⁷⁸David Forgacs (ed), **An Antonio Gramsci Reader**, p. 431. Also see: John Hoffman, **The Gramscian Challenge: Coercion and Consent in Marxist Political Theory**, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984).

hegemony. Each foregoing unit is organically linked to the other, making change evolutionary rather than revolutionary. An historic-bloc is vulnerable when there is an internal or an external crisis that undermines its effectiveness and its hegemony. It is important to note that Gramsci's political thought was very much a re-definition of some of the orthodox Marxist beliefs of the early twentieth century. Lenin's interpretation of Marx in support of the Bolshevik strategy in Russia and the subsequent failure of Communist revolutions in the rest of Europe led many scholars to rethink the Marxian theoretical platform.

While the Dependency and the World System Schools were concerned with the economic structures, in particular, the mode and the relations of production both national and global, neo-Gramscian scholars started analysing the complexity of superstructure including the realm of politics, power, ideology and institutions. Leonardo Salamini argues that Gramsci became the theoretician of the superstructure without minimising the importance of the infrastructure. For Gramsci, "the relations of production do not evolve according to autonomous and self-generating laws, but are regulated or modified by the human consciousness."⁷⁹ According to Paul Piccone, Gramsci saw Marxism as absolute historicism, "so far as it synthesizes the tradition and concretely works out the means whereby the emancipation of mankind is carried out by destroying the last and most advanced forms of internal social divisions."⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Leonardo Salamini, "Gramsci and Marxist Sociology of Knowledge: an Analysis of Hegemony-Ideology-Knowledge," **The Sociological Quarterly**, Vol. 15, 1974, p. 367.

⁸⁰ Paul Piccone, "Gramsci's Marxism: Beyond Lenin and Togliatti," **Theory and Society**, Vol. 3, No. 4, 1976, p. 493.

Piccone goes on to reinterpret Gramsci and emphasises that “praxis is the central Marxist category. It is that creative activity which re-constitutes the past in order to forge the political tools in the present, to bring about a qualitatively different future.”⁸¹

Thomas Bates writing on Gramsci in 1975 elaborated on the Gramscian theory of the “war of position”, arguing that “in fighting wars of position, revolutionaries must be able to recognize ‘organic crises’ and their various stages. According to Gramsci, an ‘organic crisis’ involves the totality of an ‘historical bloc’-the structure of society as well as its superstructure. An organic crisis is manifested as a crisis of hegemony, in which the people cease to believe the words of the national leaders, and begin to abandon the traditional parties.”⁸² Bates argued that the superstructure of the 1930s consisted of dominant parties, classes and coercive instruments of the state which withstood the economic crisis of 1929 because of the cultural and ideological organisation of the dominant classes. According to Bates, “Gramsci compared the cultural organisation of these advanced societies to the ‘trench system’ in modern warfare.”⁸³ Nigel Todd notes that Gramsci wanted the proletariat to wrest state power from the ruling class in Italy but was cognizant of the fact that the movement must have the structure and the politics to demand state power. “Gramsci postulated that the Italian bourgeoisie had formed a powerful social bloc capable of dominating

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Thomas R. Bates, “Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony,” **Journal of the History of Ideas**, Vol. 36, No. 2, 1975, p. 364.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 363.

subordinate classes.”⁸⁴ For Todd, the most important postulation of Gramsci was the concept of hegemony.

By "hegemony" Gramsci seems to mean a socio-political situation, in his terminology a "moment," in which the philosophy and practice of a society fuse or are in equilibrium; an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutions and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religion and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotation.⁸⁵

In 1977, Raymond Williams explained Gramscian hegemony as a culture of domination and subordination of particular classes.⁸⁶ Williams conceptualised hegemony within the dialectics of domination and subordination sustained by identities and relationships of a specific economic, political and cultural system. The essential element of Gramscian hegemony was the ideology of the dominant classes and according to James Howley, “Gramsci's Marxism posits the development of a determinate situation, a creation of historical forces which do not pre-determine and make inevitable the direction or nature of social action. Rather Gramscian Marxism attempts to create the consciousness of

⁸⁴ Nigel Todd, “Ideological Superstructure in Gramsci and Mao Tse-Tung,” **Journal of the History of Ideas**, Vol. 35, No.1, 1974, p.149.

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 151.

⁸⁶ Raymond Williams, **Marxism and Literature**, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 110; also see Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, **Hegemony and Socialist Strategy**, (London: Verso Press, 1985).

past conditions which live in the present in human minds and institutions as ideology.”⁸⁷

Gramscian concept of ideology was premised upon the dialectical interplay between the ideologies of the ruling classes and the proletariat or the lower classes. Gramsci thus acknowledges that ideology played a significant role in the “war of position” and the “war of movement”. The problem was that Gramsci used the “war of position” in two different ways: one signifying an historical situation when there is relatively stable, albeit temporary, equilibrium between the fundamental classes; that is, when a frontal attack (war of manoeuvre or movement) on the state is impossible, and the other to signify that there is a proper relation between the state and civil society (that is, developed capitalism).⁸⁸ In fact, as Hawley has noted, there are a number contradictions between and within the superstructure.

The neo-Gramscian IPE School

The neo-Gramscian theorists of the 1970s revisited Gramsci’s prison notebooks and re-analysed Gramscian concepts of hegemony, ideology, political power and historic blocs. By mid 1980s, Gramsci’s theory was expanded to theorise the political power of transnational capital in the global political economy. This neo-Gramscian IPE School started with the seminal

⁸⁷ James P. Hawley, “Antonio Gramsci’s Marxism: Class, State and Work,” **Social Problems**, Vol. 27, No. 5, 1980, p. 585.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 590

work of Robert Cox.⁸⁹ According to Thomas Edward Gillon, Cox is a thinker in the critical theory tradition. His work is accepted as historically-oriented and theory for Cox is a product of an interaction between an evolving historical reality and critical reflection.⁹⁰ Cox re-defined the concept of core and periphery as neither geographic designations nor economic zones as such; rather they refer to categories of work. In the transnational mode of production, the periphery is characterised by cheap, semi-skilled, mobile, and disciplined labour force both in the industrialised and lesser developed countries. Using the Gramscian conceptual framework, Cox resolves the internal-external dichotomy by illustrating that the system of dependence and under-development is determined by the transnational mode of production, which is sustained by an "international historic bloc". According to Gill:

Applying Gramsci's ideas internationally, and to this particular stage, Cox has demonstrated that it is possible to conceive of hegemony and the formation of historic blocs on a world scale. It can then be theorised what role such blocs might play in promoting broad changes in the process of capitalist development.⁹¹

The transnational mode of production was explained by modifying Gramsci's theory of hegemony. Hegemony would be fully achieved when major

⁸⁹Robert Cox, **Power, Production and Social Forces in the making of History**, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

⁹⁰ Thomas Edward Gillon, "The Dialectic of Hegemony: Robert Cox, Antonio Gramsci and Critical International Political Economy," PhD Thesis, Department of Political Science, Queens University, Kingston, Ontario, 1999, p.7.

⁹¹Stephen R. Gill and David Law, "Global Hegemony and the Structural Power of Capital", **International Studies** Quarterly, Volume 30, No.4, 1989, p. 477.

institutions and forms of organisation- economic, social and political- as well as key values of the dominant state become models for emulation in other subordinate states. In this view of hegemony, the patterns of emulation are most likely in the core or most developed states, rather than in the less developed periphery.⁹² In essence what the neo-Gramscian scholars were doing was using Gramscian theory-in particular his most important theoretical formulations hegemony, counter-hegemony, organic intellectuals, and historic blocs- to analyse global capitalism and the structural power of capital. The main feature of this global capitalism was the post-war transnational capitalism, which had effectively integrated a large part of the globe into a single capitalist bloc. However, the whole world was not included since the Soviet bloc and China had put constraints on the limit to capital expansion, but this changed with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and following a series of economic reforms in China in the 1990s.

Sustained by the international historic bloc, the dominance of transnational capital was institutionalised and regularised by the organic intellectuals, who helped cement the link between structure and superstructure. According to Gill:

The organic intellectuals are the 'concrete articulators' of the hegemonic ideology which provides cohesion for, and helps to integrate, the historic bloc. Intellectuals are not simply producers of ideology, they are also 'organisers of hegemony', that is, they theorise the way in which

⁹²Stephen Gill, **American Hegemony and the Trilateral Commission**, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 47.

hegemony can be developed or maintained.⁹³

While organic intellectuals are articulators of hegemony, they function within a clearly defined institutional structure such as through the Trilateral Commission. The Commission was created initially as a response to a pervasive sense that the international system and the global distribution of power were in a state of flux.⁹⁴ The Trilateral Commission, in the post-war era, became the 'network' from which the ideological basis for a capitalist world economy emanated. This supra-state institution, however, also assisted in shaping state policies, especially of countries that were members of the liberal capitalist bloc. The power of capital had significantly increased its structural capabilities thus directly challenging and occasionally undermining the relative power of the state. Historic structures are shaped by this structural power of capital within the transnational mode of production. According to Gill, "the staggering flow of transnational finance have a much more murky 'nationality', with the result that they fit less well into the nation-centered analytical categories still quite common in theories of capital-state relations."⁹⁵ In fact, the increase in the structural power of capital and the decline in the relative power of the state assisted the structural power of business.⁹⁶ In particular Transnational Corporations (TNCs) and private firms which operate globally can easily adopt

⁹³Ibid, pp. 49-50.

⁹⁴Stephen Gill, "The Emerging Hegemony of Transnational Capital: Trilateralism and Global Order," David Rapkin (ed), **World Leadership and Hegemony**, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990), p.123.

⁹⁵Jeffery A. Winters, "Power and the Control of Capital," **World Politics**, Vol 46, No.3, 1994, p. 421.

⁹⁶John Stopford and Susan Strange, **Rival States, Rival Firms: Competition for World Market Shares**, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

strategies of exit and evasion. According to Goodman and Pauly:

Multinational structures enabled firms to evade capital controls by changing transfer prices or the timing of payments to or from foreign subsidiaries. The deepening of financial markets meant that firms could use subsidiaries to raise or lend funds on foreign markets. If controls in a country became too onerous, MNEs could also attempt to escape them altogether by transferring activities abroad, that is, by exercising the exit option.⁹⁷

The rapid growth of TNCs or Multinational Companies after the war has drastically altered core-periphery relations. Within the transnational mode of production, core and periphery economic structures are found in both developing and industrialised countries. Robert Cox pointed out that social organisation of production constructed within the nexus of local and international production relations determine core-periphery political economy. Neo-Gramscian theory, however, also helps to explain American hegemony, which continues to play a decisive role in influencing global economic relations. Unlike Wallerstein's World System that originated in the sixteenth century Europe, American hegemony rests on the globalist rhetoric. According to Hirst and Thompson:

This new globalist rhetoric is based on an anti-political liberalism. Set

⁹⁷John B. Goodman and Louis W. Pauly, "The Obsolescence of Capital Controls? Economic Management in an Age of Global Markets," **World Politics**, Vol. 46, No. 1, 1993, p. 58.

free from politics, the new globalised economy allows companies and markets to allocate the factors of production to greatest advantage, without the distortions of state intervention. Free trade, Transnational Companies and world capital markets have set business free from the constraints of politics.⁹⁸

According to Stephen Gill,⁹⁹ the capitalist market economy of the United States is now ever more central in the world economy, although its centrality contains substantial contradictions for the rest of the world because of economic inter-dependence. The changes in the United States reflect a global trend which we can call the internationalisation of the state, a development which calls into question the Westphalian model of state sovereignty. Thus, globalisation is linked to, and partly engenders a process of mutation in previous forms of state and political identity. According to Gill, the neo-Gramscian framework provides theoreticians with a set of meta-principles to help explain and interpret the ontology and the constitution of historically specific configurations: "social ontology rests upon the inter-subjective ('historical-subjective') frameworks that help to objectify and constitute social life, such as patterns of social reproduction, the political economy of production and destruction, of culture and civilisation."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸Paul Hirst and Graham Thompson, "Globalisation and the Future of Nation-state," in **Economy and Society**, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1995, p. 414.

⁹⁹Stephen Gill, **Restructuring Global Politics: Trilateral Relations and World Order "After" the Cold War**, York University Center for International and Strategic Studies Working Paper No. 11, 1992, p. 10.

¹⁰⁰Stephen Gill, **Power and Resistance in the new World Order**, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) p. 44.

Far reaching academic developments in political theory in particular with the seminal work of Robert Cox in 1987 have opened up new areas of research and critical analysis. Developing Cox's Gramscian historical materialism, Stephen Gill analysed the structural power of capital and the associated transnational mode of production. In addition, for Gill it became imperative to understand the transnational power of capital which provided the ideological and legal legitimacy to the capitalist political economy. The neo-Gramscian School has, therefore, reinvigorated development studies by providing a new analytical paradigm based on Gramscian theory. Under-development and development are no longer a geo-specific phenomenon, but rather operate internationally by transnationalising production relations and re-ordering social forces. Associated with this production variable is the mobility of capital and its structural capability to determine capital allocation within the global political economy.

Stephen Gill identifies “cultural imperialism” as one of the drivers of the global political economy and argues that there exists a global constitution of capital that operates in ways that seek to subordinate the universal to the particular interests of large capital, that is its discipline operates hierarchically (in terms of social classes, gender, race and in terms of national power) within and across different nations, regions and in the global political economy. According to Gill, “part of what is at issue is how world society has been progressively configured by possessive individualism, that is by individual, particular, or private appropriation, while production has become progressively universal and

socialised. New constitutionalism prescribes a series of measures to restructure states and their civil societies based on the primacy of free enterprise, and the discipline of capital operating broadly within the constraints of classical liberal notions of the rule of law.”¹⁰¹ Both Gill and Cox appreciate the role played by culture and ethnicity in hegemonic formations but these are not central to their analysis of the international economic system. Gill adopts a Gramscian framework to analyse transnational capital which allows hegemonic powers like to the US to dominate the global political economy. Cox on the other hand uses Gramscian framework to look at social forces in the making of international history. Nevertheless, Randolph Persaud and Rob Walker, despite being from the neo-Gramscian IPE School, argued that race and ethnicity have been given the epistemological status of silence in international relations and provided alternatives on how questions of race might be taken up in the contemporary analysis of international relations.¹⁰² Quoting Michel Ralph Trouillott, Persaud and Walker describe this status of silence as the moment of fact creation, the moment of fact assembly, the moment of retrieval and the moment of retrospective significance.

The neo-Gramscian Culture/Ethnic School has built on the growing appreciation in the Neo-Gramscian IPE School of race and ethnicity as driving

¹⁰¹ Stephen Gill, “Constitution of Global Capitalism,” Paper presented to a Panel: The Capitalist World, Past and Present at the International Studies, Association Annual Convention, Los Angeles, 2000
 <<http://www.theglobalsite.ac.uk/press/010gill.pdf#search='Constitution%20of%20Global%20Capitalism'>> Accessed 6 June 2007.

¹⁰² Randolph B. Persaud and Rob Walker, “Apertura: race in international relations,” **Alternatives: Global, Local, Political**, Vol. 26, No.4, 2001, pp. 373-377.

force in social formation and re-focused Gramscian analytical tools towards the study of colonial and post-colonial societies. More importantly, these scholars analysed ethnic and cultural divisions, sub-cultures and the hegemonic role of the military by re-conceptualising hegemonic formations, anti-hegemony, counter-hegemony and historic blocs, the same Gramscian conceptual tools used by Robert Cox in formulating his new critical theory in the early 1980s.

The neo-Gramscian Culture/Ethnicity School

The neo-Gramscian Culture/Ethnicity School developed Gramscian analytical framework for the study of colonial and post-colonial societies. Neo-Gramscian scholar John Girling in 1984 used Gramscian theory to analyse state formation in Thailand. According to Girling, Gramsci's argument can be extended "by suggesting that in East Asia the 'historic' impediment to an industrial revolution was, in fact, shattered firstly by Japanese colonialism-which created an economic infrastructure and a skilled and educated labour force-and secondly by the exigencies of war and civil war."¹⁰³ For countries like Thailand such an external crisis has not occurred to "sharpen or hasten the productive process; nonetheless, the tendencies are present, even though hindered by bureaucratic sedimentation."¹⁰⁴ Girling sees Thai history as a process of autonomy gathering strength as hitherto subordinate groups free themselves from material, political, and ideological constraints. Thus the values of rural society

¹⁰³ John Girling, "Thailand in Gramscian Perspective," **Pacific Affairs**, Vol. 57, No. 3, 1984, p. 400.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

reflect the "pre-existing formations" of stage one: cooperation for specific purposes (harvesting, house-building) is one aspect; avoidance of conflict (through deference, face-saving, use of intermediaries) is another.¹⁰⁵ Girling notes that Thailand's ruling classes transmit traditional values within a patron-client setting and provides an important theme for the study of nation states. He argues that Japanese colonialism provided the cultural logic for the post colonial state to manage diverse social interests within a bureaucratic-parliamentary compromise.

Girling makes an important link between colonial culture and the post-colonial ruling classes in the sense that the former provided ethnic and cultural legitimacy to post-colonial hegemonic formation. Similarly, Robert Fallon in 1986 used Gramscian theory to analyse the Senegalese ruling class. Fallon, like Girling, conceptualised the growth of Senegalese political power as a passive revolution where the ruling class "relinquished force and authoritarianism as its method of governance for the politics of alliances and co-optation. Indeed, the ruling class, with the help of its organic intellectuals, asserted its hegemony because it universalised its own interests and transformed them symbolically into the embodiment of the general interest."¹⁰⁶

The article argues that a Gramscian conceptualisation of politics can help illuminate some of the fundamental processes of social change in Third World societies. Fallon used Gramsci's notions of hegemony, passive revolution, and

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 393

¹⁰⁶ Robert Fallon Jnr, "Gramsci and the Legitimization of the State: The Case of the Senegalese Passive Revolution," **Canadian Journal of Political Science**, Vol. 19, No. 4, 1986, p. 730.

organic intellectuals to elucidate the formative efforts of Senegal's ruling class. The shape and content of these efforts reflected the organic intellectuals' decisive intervention in the organisation and elaboration of the political, moral, and cultural framework of a new hegemony.¹⁰⁷ Fallon is instructive in his analysis and asserts that the Senegalese ruling class has successfully maintained a historic bloc through political intervention and alliances based on popular traditions, class, ethnicity and geography. The Senegalese ruling class are also managers of legitimisation of their political project and they do not go beyond existing socioeconomic structures, and thus avoid contradictions and conflict.

The theme of ruling classes in post-colonial hegemonic formations is further developed by Christine Sylvester, who in 1990 borrowed from Gramsci to demonstrate the inter-relatedness of the organs of state and class. According to Sylvester, each of three components unfolded separately but simultaneously and each brought tangible but partial transformations of consciousness, state, economy, and class structure which linger into the present and which defy easy characterisation as the results of a failed revolution. The article treats the theoretical characteristics of simultaneous revolutions first and then details their application to the Zimbabwean experience.¹⁰⁸ Sylvester notes the agency of ruling blocs in cultural and ethnic mobilisation and its influence in state formation in Zimbabwe. However, Sylvester also observed that the Marxist

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 749.

¹⁰⁸ Christine Sylvester, "Simultaneous revolutions: the Zimbabwean case," **Journal of Southern African Studies**, Vol. 16, No. 3, 1990, pp. 461.

revolution lost its fire somewhere along the line and dissolved into contradiction-riddled reformism under the ZANU (PF) government. Her article argues that Zimbabwe's post-independence contradictions are grounded in at least four simultaneous revolutions which took place in the years following World War II. Two of the revolutions were of a type which, borrowing from Antonio Gramsci, can be termed 'passive', and the remaining two resembled 'anti-passive' and 'council' revolutions. Each unfolded separately but simultaneously and each brought tangible but partial transformations of consciousness, state, economy, and class structure which linger into the present and which defy easy characterisation as the results of 'a' failed revolution. The article treats the theoretical characteristics of simultaneous revolutions first and then details their application to the Zimbabwean case.¹⁰⁹

According to Sylvester, the Zimbabwean ruling class maintains political hegemony by politicising ethnic identities and sub-cultures. The cultural ethnic analysis of Sylvester was developed by Dana Sawchuk, who argued that culture, class, politics and religion played a significant role in the Nicaraguan revolution. Dana Sawchuk in 1997 looked at the role of the Catholic Church in the Nicaraguan revolution and argues that "in Nicaragua (as elsewhere in Latin America), matters of religion, class, and politics are inextricably linked and that insights from a Gramscian-inspired sociology of religion provide us with this type of perspective."¹¹⁰ Moreover, Sawchuk highlights that the Gramscian

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 452.

¹¹⁰ Dana Sawchuk, "The Catholic Church in the Nicaraguan Revolution: A Gramscian Analysis," **Sociology of Religion**, Vol. 58, No. 1, 1997, p.40.

framework can afford us a deeper understanding of how the Catholic Church both supported and helped to de-legitimize the Nicaraguan revolution of 1979. According to Sawchuk:

The Gramscian analysis developed throughout this essay brings us to conclude that in the Nicaraguan case, religion did not "cause" the revolution and the Church did not "lead" it. However, at that specific historical conjuncture - characterized by a structural crisis of dependent capitalism exacerbated by natural disaster, the increasingly intolerable repression of a regime which had lost all semblance of legitimacy, the split of the ruling classes among themselves, and the emergence of a revolutionary movement able to mobilize opposition and present a viable political alternative - religion and Church representatives did play a critical role.¹¹¹

The Catholic Church and the Sandinistas provided the counter-hegemonic impetus that finally led to the disintegration of the Somoza regime in 1979. Somoza's armed forces had started to act outside the control of the elite as Sawchuk points out of "split" among the ruling classes. Conflict within the Nicaraguan ruling historic-bloc, hegemonic challenges and resistance from the Catholic Church ultimately led to the collapse of the Somoza regime.

More recently, Nicola Pratt combined a Gramscian perspective with the work of Edward Said to show how political power is operationalised through cultural processes and the role of the civil society in challenging and reproducing

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 48.

counter-culture in the state of Egypt.¹¹² Pratt in 2005 looked at Egypt's post-colonial moment as shaping the production and reproduction of hegemony in the post-independence period. Pratt outlines her conceptualisation of the post-colonial as follows:

"The 'postcolonial' is a highly contested term. However, here I use it to signify 'the spaces where many men and women have to intervene in structures worked through by colonialism, as well as earlier and later histories of domination.' The experience of colonialism represents a significant narrative of the past in relation to which men and women position themselves; a historical reservoir for the reproduction of hegemony and the construction of counter hegemony in the post-independence period."¹¹³

The re-conceptualisation of culture through counter-hegemonic movements provides subalterns and counter-hegemons with alternative means of deploying collective power to de-construct the political state. Pratt argued for a conceptualisation of culture as a fluid and historically contingent process and demonstrated how this process plays out in the context of post-colonial Egypt. Yet, those that engage with the realm of culture as a means of deploying power (whether to uphold or challenge the political status) more often than not resort to a representation of national or group identities as essentialised and immutable. In other words, cultures and identities are socially constructed, yet,

¹¹² Nicola Pratt, "Identity, Culture and Democratization: The case of Egypt," **New Political Science**, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2005, p. 70.

¹¹³ Ibid, p. 75.

for political reasons, they are represented as natural and unchanging—what Spivak has termed “strategic essentialism.” Of particular interest here is how the reproduction of national culture and identity acts as a means of reproducing the dominant configuration of relations of power in society, or hegemony.

Democratisation is not only about allowing multi-party elections or enabling the independence of the judiciary, but also about re-configuring relations of power in order to open spaces for pluralism, diversity and inclusiveness. This necessarily entails challenging monolithic representations of national culture that impose unity to the detriment of the rights of individual citizens.¹¹⁴ Pratt’s analysis underpins the central theme of this thesis: the dynamic between culture and ethnicity in shaping the political history of a nation state. This theme is developed below under the sub-heading “Themes for Analysis.”

Ahmet Oncu in 2003, like Pratt, used a similar Gramscian paradigm to show “dictatorship” and “hegemony” formulations in Turkey.¹¹⁵ According to Oncu, the phenomenon of officialdom and hegemony are closely related. They emerge more or less at the same historical moment, as institutions of modern capitalist society. The history of the Turkish state is conceptualised by Oncu as a political project to create a citizenry with a moral-intellectual outlook receptive to legal-rational domination, organized on the basis of a nationalist ideology.¹¹⁶ Oncu argues that the counter-hegemonic movements in Turkey were forced to

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 86.

¹¹⁵ Ahmet Oncu, “Dictatorship Plus Hegemony: Gramscian Analysis of the Turkish State,” **Science and Society**, Vol. 67, No. 3, 2003, p. 304.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 310.

find a moral force, which was provided by the military, which opposed the ruling class.¹¹⁷ The history of the Turkish state provides support to the argument that the ruling classes must establish hegemony since without this there is no guarantee of the successful use of coercive power on behalf of the sectional interests of the dominant classes. Oncu also highlights that the Turkish state moved from multiculturalism to an elitist nationalist movement with the Nationalist War of Liberation. Oncu notes that the cultural vision of the nationalist state in Turkey was challenged by Islamists and anti-Fascist groups but in the end the military defended the constitution above democracy.

The neo-Gramscian Culture/Ethnicity School brought Gramscian analytical framework used by the neo-Gramscian IPE theorists back to the analysis of state formations. More importantly, Gramscian theory was used to analyse colonial culture, post-colonial hegemonic formations, sub-cultural, anti-hegemony, counter-hegemony and politicisation of ethnicity. Such themes from neo-Gramscian Culture/Ethnicity School are used below to develop an analytical framework for the study of Fiji.

Themes for Analysis

Theme One – the legacy of colonial culture

As stated previously, neo-Gramscian theory was used since the 1980s to

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 320-321.

develop analytical frameworks to analyse both colonial and post-colonial states. As John Girling mentioned, the colonial culture of Thailand provided the ideological foundation for managing the post-colonial state and the same will be argued for Fiji. According to Henry Srebrnik, 'the political system in Fiji remains to this day a complex blend of pre-and post-contact aboriginal institutions that co-exist, very uneasily, with universalistic state institutions. This 'dual power' is permanently built into the structure of the state; indeed, the native bodies have proved more durable than the liberal democratic ones left behind by the colonial rulers."¹¹⁸

In Fiji, British colonialism provided the legitimacy for the cultural hegemony of indigenous Fijian chiefs and the ethnic domination of the Europeans. The cultural hegemony of the indigenous chiefs was challenged by anti-hegemonic¹¹⁹ groups in the form of anti-colonial sub-cultural movements.

¹¹⁸ Henry Srebrnik, "Ethnicity, religion and the issue of aboriginality in a small island state: Why does Fiji flounder?," **The Round Table**, Vol. 364, 2002, p. 190.

¹¹⁹ Anti-hegemonic movements are organised social protests against the hegemonic historic-bloc. Anti-hegemonic protest movements are often underground and disengaged from formal political processes. These movements have no political organisation and are anti-colonial. However in colonial and post-colonial Fiji, there were a number of anti-hegemonic movements (indigenous and Indo-Fijian resistance) some of which formed around political parties: the National Federation Party (NFP), the Fijian Nationalist Party (FNP), the Western United Front (WUF), the Fiji Labour Party (FLP), the Fijian Association Party (FAP), the Party of National Unity (PANU), the Vakarisito Lewenivanua (VLV) and the National Alliance Party of Fiji (NAPF). For further reading on anti-hegemony see: Alan Fowler, "Social Economy in the South: A Civil Society Perspective," **A Seminar on Social Economy of the South**, May 2001, p.3; John Sanbonmatsu, **The Post-Modern Prince: Critical Theory, Left Strategy, and the Making of the New Political Subject**, (New York; Monthly Review Press, 2004); Richard N. Adams, "The Evolution of Racism in Guatemala: Hegemony, Science and Anti-

Moreover, there were pressures on the colonial culture from within the colonial historic bloc as various Governors to the Colony of Fiji questioned the cultural hegemony of the chiefs, and the influential European settlers lobbied for a larger anglosphere by recommending association with New Zealand. The colonial structures largely remained intact as Fiji moved towards independence in 1970.

The colonial culture of elevating and legally sanctioning the positions of the indigenous chiefs and the policy of keeping races separate remained embedded in state institutions and influenced among other things ethnic-based political parties, trade unions and religious organisations during the colonial and the post-colonial periods. One of the themes that can be used from Girling is that colonial Fiji struggled to maintain a hegemonic historic bloc in the face of internal cultural and ethnic struggles, including anti-hegemony from indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians, and ethnic conflict due to a three way power struggle between the Europeans in control of the colonial state, the indigenous Fijian chiefs in control of land and the Indo-Fijian leaders seeking political representation and social equality.

Theme Two – the role culture and ethnicity in hegemony and anti-hegemony/counter-hegemony

hegemony,” Regna Darnell and Frederic Gleach (eds), **Histories of Anthropology: Volume 1**, (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), pp.132-180; for conceptualisation of anti-hegemony as political spaces beyond hierarchy and sovereignty see: Peyman Vahabzadeh, **Articulated Experiences**, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003).

Nicola Pratt provides the second theme for this thesis: the discourse between culture and ethnicity and class formation in shaping political hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony. Hegemony is based on both material and structural capability of a particular social group or alliance to achieve hegemony and maintain itself politically as a historic bloc. The cultural hegemony of the indigenous Fijian chiefs had its origins in European contact, which brought an influence to Fiji that restructured the indigenous Fijian social order. It is often argued that Tongan influence in eastern Fiji had materially altered overtime the social structure of the eastern parts of Fiji with the emergence of indigenous chiefly hierarchies, based on patrilineal descent groups. There are also social hierarchies within the indigenous Fijian society and the most pronounced is the division between hereditary chiefs and indigenous commoners.

Based on the theoretical formulation of Pratt, one of the themes of this thesis is that cultural, ethnic and class divisions played a key role in shaping hegemony and anti hegemony/counter-hegemony in colonial and post-colonial Fiji.

The ethnic and cultural divisions operated on three levels. Firstly, there were cultural and class divisions within the indigenous Fijian and the Indo-Fijian communities. In the indigenous Fijian community, for example, there were divisions between indigenous chiefs and commoners, between chiefs and a number of indigenous sub-cultural groups, between the west and the eastern parts of Fiji, and class divisions between indigenous rural and urban communities. In post-colonial Fiji, divisions within the indigenous community

were highlighted by the formation of a number of indigenous political parties.

Similarly, there were cultural and class divisions among Indo-Fijians, in particular between those who came to Fiji as indentured labourers and free migrants. After indenture, there were further divisions among various imported cultural organisations from India, including the orthodox Hindu Sanatan Dharam, the reform-oriented Arya Samaj, the Muslim League and the South Indian Sangam. Among Indo-Fijians, there were also class distinctions between sugar cane farmers (peasants) and urban middle-classes and between descendants of indenture and Gujarati business operators. In post-colonial Fiji, divisions within the Indo-Fijian community were highlighted by the contest for communal hegemony between the Fiji Labour Party and the National Federation Party.

Second, there were ethnic and cultural divisions between Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians and these divisions were exploited by the colonial government and indigenous chiefs. After World War II, indigenous Fijian chiefs and Europeans established an ethnic bloc against Indo-Fijians who became a majority in the colony.¹²⁰ During negotiations for independence, ethnic and cultural divisions played a significant role as indigenous chiefs asserted their claim on political power on the basis of their cultural position in the indigenous

¹²⁰ W. E. H. Stanner, "Postwar Fiji: The 1946 Census," ***Pacific Affairs***, Vol. 20, No. 4, 1947, pp. 407-421. According to Stanner, at the end of 1946, Indo-Fijians were estimated to be at least 46.5 per cent of the population compared with indigenous Fijians at 45.5 per cent. Stanner argued that Indians may displace Europeans in the control of agriculture, trade and commerce... (p. 411).

community and the Deed of Cession, which transferred political power from the indigenous chiefs to the Crown in 1874. Ethnic and cultural divisions between Fiji's two dominant communities continued in post-colonial Fiji after the consolidation of chiefly hegemony. However, these divisions were aggressively re-asserted, following the success of inter-ethnic alliances in 1987 and 1999.

Thirdly, there were ethnic, cultural and class alliances between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians in 1959, 1987 and 1999 which challenged the political foundation of ethnic divisions and successfully formed alternative historic blocs in 1987 and 1999. In 1985, indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijian trade union members formed the Fiji Labour Party with the objective of improving conditions and wages of urban workers. The party extended its support by forming an alliance with Indo-Fijian sugar cane farmers. The Fiji Labour Party's policies on workers attracted a number of urban working class indigenous Fijians, who moved away from the ethnic politics of the chiefs in 1987. Similarly, in 1999, indigenous Fijian political parties formed alliances with the Fiji Labour Party to win government.

The three layers of ethnicity, culture and class are inter-related in the sense that indigenous divisions in the post-colonial context led to multiethnic political and class alliances and to counter such alliances, racial hierarchies were re-asserted by indigenous chiefs. However, in 2000, indigenous coercive assertions failed resulting in military intervention of a new kind.

Theme Three – the changing role of military in political hegemony and counter-hegemony

Ahmed Onctu in his analysis of the Turkish state provides analysis of the various phases of Turkish history. At first the Turkish state was a multiethnic entity but the young Turks used ethnic nationalism to foment a war of liberation, which resulted in the political break from the past. However, various social groups, including the military, challenged the hegemony of the Turkish ruling class. The military in Fiji played a central role in establishing and maintaining colonial hegemony to 1970. During the colonial period, the military was used to break challenges to the colonial government and the cultural hegemony of indigenous chiefs. Military was used to subdue anti-hegemonic Hill Tribes and other sub-cultural anti-chief movements following cession of Fiji to Britain. After World War II, the Fiji military increasingly recruited indigenous Fijians, who took over from the Europeans as the dominant ethnic bloc in the armed forces. Indo-Fijians on the other hand refused to volunteer for service during the war because their leaders saw the army as an imperialist entity. In post-colonial Fiji, the military played a central role in re-establishing the indigenous chiefly order in 1987, following the election of an inter-ethnic class bloc, and enforced chiefly hegemony since the first coup in 1987 until 2000.

From 2001, the military challenged the cultural as well as the political hegemony of the indigenous Fijian chiefs and became highly critical of the indigenous government that adopted an overtly ethnicist policy from 2000. In

December 2006, the Republic of the Fiji Military Forces overthrew the elected government, accusing it of fomenting ethnic and cultural divisions. Moreover, the military leaders argued that the government was continuing the colonial culture of division and patrimonialism. In the neo-Gramscian sense, the military became a counter-hegemonic force by initiating a war of position to replace the chief-led post-colonial historic bloc.

In summary, the three themes for Fiji using the neo-Gramscian analytical framework are:

1. Based on Girling's analysis of the colonial state in Thailand, I argue that colonial Fiji struggled to maintain an ethnicised hegemonic bloc in the face of internal cultural and ethnic struggles, including anti-hegemonic challenges from indigenous sub-cultures and ethnic conflict due to a three way power struggle between the Europeans in control of the colonial state, the indigenous Fijian chiefs in control of land and the Indo-Fijian leaders seeking political representation and equality with Europeans.
2. Using Nicola Pratt's analysis of post-colonial state in Egypt, I argue that in Fiji, culture and ethnicity shaped political hegemony and anti-hegemony/counter-hegemony both during colonial and post colonial periods. There were cultural divisions within indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians as well as inter-ethnic divisions which were exploited by the

colonial government and later by the indigenous chiefs to consolidate political power. However, in post-colonial Fiji, inter-ethnic class and political alliances dislodged the indigenous chiefs from power in 1987 and again in 1999, resulting in the re-assertion of ethnic hierarchy by indigenous chiefs.

3. Using Ahmed Oncu's theory on the militarisation of the Turkish state, I argue that in Fiji the military assisted in maintaining colonial hegemony by suppressing challenges to the colonial government and to the cultural hegemony of the chiefs from indigenous sub-cultural anti-hegemonic movements. In post-colonial Fiji, an indigenous-dominated military assisted in re-asserting indigenous chiefly hegemony in 1987 against inter-ethnic class alliances. However, following the 2000 coup, the military was no longer united as intra-communal influences caused divisions and led commander, Frank Bainimarama, to question the political legitimacy of the indigenous state from 2001. As a result, the military transformed itself into a counter-hegemonic force, progressing political change through strategies to de-ethnicise the state after the December 2006 military coup.

The three themes are inter-related in the sense that the first theme provides the framework for the colonial and post-colonial historic blocs and factionalisation and divisions within these blocs based on the second theme of ethnicity, culture and class, which shaped colonial and chiefly hegemonic formations, anti-

hegemony from indigenous sub-cultural movements and Indo-Fijians, and counter-hegemony in the form of inter-alliances in 1987 and 1999.

Conclusion

In summary, euro-centric themes of the Modernisation theory prompted Dependency, neo-Dependency and World System Schools to look at economic under-development, dependent development and internal colonisation in developing nations. Unlike the Dependency School, the World System School developed a three-tier conceptual framework that showed that there was movement from periphery to semi-periphery and eventually to core. In the 1970s, social theorists using the work of Antonio Gramsci provided a critique to the Dependency and the World System Schools by evaluating the role of power, institutions and ideology in hegemonic formations. By the 1980s, neo-Gramscian scholars were critically analysing the international political economy and colonial and post-colonial societies using Gramscian concepts such as hegemony, historic blocs and counter-hegemony. IPE theorist Robert Cox argued that economic inter-dependency of states was due to the increasing mobility and power of transnational capital which had radically restructured capital and state relations. By applying Gramscian theory, the neo-Gramscian IPE School looked at the social relations of production and the role of the international historic bloc in sustaining a capitalist global economic order. However, the Dependency, the neo-Dependency, the World System, and the neo-Gramscian IPE Schools did not appreciate the role of ethnicity and culture

in post-colonial societies. Nevertheless, the theoretical framework provided by Cox impressed upon the neo-Gramscian Culture/Ethnic School, which used Gramscian theory to analyse the role of ethnicity, culture, class and military in hegemony and counter-hegemony in colonial and post-colonial societies. Based on this framework, I look at the colonial historic bloc, indigenous chiefly hegemony, anti-hegemony, counter-hegemony and military intervention in Fiji.

CHAPTER 2

FIJI HISTORIOGRAPHY

In the Fiji context, hegemony means the cultural hegemony of the indigenous Fijian chiefs and the political hegemony of the colonial administration during the colonial period from 1874 to 1970, followed by the political hegemony of the chiefs from 1970 to 2006. Anti-hegemony is first manifested as a form of sub-cultural social protest from subordinate groups in the nineteenth century and later on after independence the protest takes the form of organised political resistance with the formation of the indigenous nationalist party, the Western United Front, the Fiji Labour Party and more recently counter-hegemony from the Republic of the Fiji Military Forces. In this thesis the concept 'historic bloc' is used to refer to the colonial government, the indigenous chiefs and the Europeans during the colonial era and the alliance between the Europeans, Indo-Fijian businesses and the indigenous chiefs during post-colonial period.

After Fiji gained its independence, nationalist historians revised some of the earlier historical interpretations of the Europeans. Drawing on Dependency, World System and neo-Marxist theories (as demonstrated in Chapter 1), indigenous historians of the Pacific ventured to give an "inside" view of the history of Fiji. This was commonly referred to as the "de-colonisation" of Pacific historiography. In Fiji, post-independence historians, most of them from the University of the South Pacific, deliberated on and analysed a number of issues such as ethnic relations, indenture and economic dependency. This thesis

seeks to extend the Revisionist approach using the neo-Gramscian theory to analyse the hegemony of the chiefs and the colonial government, anti-hegemony as a response to the chief-colonial government historic bloc and the consolidation of chiefly hegemony in the 1960s, which continued largely unchallenged, interrupted temporarily in 1975, 1987, 1999 and again in 2006.

For the purpose of this Chapter, we shall examine some of the most common approaches to the study of Fiji history. We shall look at the Dependency, World System, Marxist and Revisionist approaches. In addition we shall explore the question of culture and ethnicity or race playing a decisive role in shaping Fiji's political history. The objective of this Chapter is to put into perspective these approaches adopted by academics in the past to study Fiji history.

Fiji Theorists

Narayan-Dependency School

As detailed in Chapter 1, the Dependency School had a profound impact on social sciences, because it challenged the euro-centric concept of economic development. In Fiji, Dependency analytical framework was adopted by Fiji academic Jai Narayan who demonstrated the manner in which capitalism became established in Fiji. Jai Narayan was critiquing indigenous thinkers like Rusiate Nayacakalau who used the uni-linear modernisation approach to study the development of the Fijian administration. For Nayacakalau, change within

the Fijian administration was evolutionary and based on an inter-play between modernity and communalism. Nayacakalau argued that indigenous leaders did not appreciate the urgency of indigenous Fijians to modernise and release indigenous land for commercial agriculture.¹²¹ Narayan challenged Nayacakalau and argued that indigenous Fijians could not develop and modernise because of their economic dependence on metropolitan powers, which impacted on Fiji's economic development as a whole.

According to Narayan, Fiji's external relations were characterised by its increasing incorporation into and dependence upon the world economy. He argued that "its internal dimension was marked by the gradual institution and development of an essentially capitalist mode of production, distribution and exchange."¹²² Narayan emphasised that there existed before capitalist penetration a pre-imperialist Fijian social structure and an indigenous mode of production. This indigenous mode of production was modified through the European contact. What transpired in the post-contact period was a capitalist mode of production. Jai Narayan analyses the changes caused by capitalism to the indigenous Fijian social structure, and asserts that capitalism had created a racial division of labour. As a consequence, Narayan noted that "ethnic background was more important than economic differences, and these differences were much greater in relation to other communities than internally

¹²¹ Matt Tomlinson, "Reflexivity, Tradition, and Power: The Work of R.R. Nayacakalou," **Ethnos**, Vol. 71, No. 4, 2006, p. 495.

¹²² Jai Narayan, **The Political Economy of Fiji**, (Suva: South Pacific Review Press, 1984), p. 29.

among themselves."¹²³

Capitalist reality in Fiji was based on British indirect rule and more specifically on the capitalist class. According to Nii K. Plange:

At the commanding heights of the economy was a capitalist class which was solely European. They controlled the sugar industry, the copra business, banking institutions, shipping and commercial houses....¹²⁴

Narayan's thesis on the role of capitalism opened up a new approach to the study of development and social formations in Fiji. Previous academics had largely distanced themselves from using "radical" or "Marxist" political thought to analyse Fiji.

Durutalo-World System and Power Politics

Simione Durutalo extended the work of Jai Narayan by adopting the World System approach to the study of unequal development in Fiji. Durutalo addressed "internal colonialism" in Fiji and in particular how traditional authority was recklessly used to create regional economic disparity. He stressed the importance of agency:

The internal colonialism framework of analysis reveal to us the

¹²³Ibid, p. 54.

¹²⁴Nii K. Plange, "Colonial Capitalism and Class Formation: a retrospective overview," **The Journal of Pacific Studies**, Volume 11, 1985, p. 92.

dynamics of peasant (or proletarian) communities within a particular social formation, and allow us to see these communities not as "primitive isolates," but how they are affected and respond to larger national and global processes. It enables us to see how people make their own history.¹²⁵

For Durutalo, capitalism and its pervasive influence had effectively created ruling capitalist elite through indirect rule. While criticising capitalism, Durutalo went further and stated that in eastern Fiji a small section of the society began to take a larger share of the proceeds of human labour. As the production of surplus increased, the elite were able to distance themselves further from productive activities, gradually forming a distinct ruling class.¹²⁶ The ruling class of eastern Fiji would later articulate the demands of capitalism made possible through European contact. In fact, contact and differentiation gave impetus to class struggle.

The struggle between classes developed during the impact of imperialism, particularly its colonialist phase in Fiji. Classes in Fiji were determined by Fiji's incorporation into the world capitalist economy.¹²⁷ Durutalo then went on to criticise the Fijian administration and the Fijian communal system and in particular, indigenous chief Ratu Sukuna's idealisation of the indigenous past.

¹²⁵Simione Durutalo, *Internal Colonialism and Unequal Regional Development: The Case of Western Viti Levu, Fiji*, MA Thesis, University of the South Pacific, Suva, p. 19.

¹²⁶*Ibid*, p. 39.

¹²⁷Simione Durutalo, "Buccaneers and Chiefly Historians," **The Journal of Pacific Studies**, Volume 11, 1985, p. 127.

Durutalo argued that “the resurrection of the so-called communal system of production by Ratu Sukuna gave rise to much confusion and was based on a distorted view of production in Fijian villages.”¹²⁸ By challenging the legitimacy of the Fijian communal system, Durutalo opened up a totally new field of academia that questioned not just the colonial orthodoxy, but also indigenous Fijian institutions which co-existed with that orthodoxy.

This approach also allowed new questions to be explored such as the contradiction between the chiefly class and the commoners, the logic of plantation capital, and the use and abuse of Indian indentured labour. Durutalo established that contemporary politics in Fiji was characterised by “Ratuism, Religion and Rugby”. According to Durutalo, Ratuism is chiefly privilege that is embedded in the indigenous neo-traditional order, which is sustained by Methodist religion and rugby.

The work of Simone Durutalo was further extended by Alumita Durutalo. According to Alumita Durutalo, indigenous Fijian political discourse is founded upon three inter-related concepts of vanua (people), lotu (religion) and matanitu (state). These form the ideological foundation for the political dominance of eastern indigenous chiefs. Durutalo explains: “Vanua identifies and demarcates a geopolitical boundary within which Fijian cultural practices and chiefly rule prevail. Lotu, meaning the new

¹²⁸Simone Durutalo, **The Paramountcy of Fijian Interest and the Politicisation of Ethnicity**, South Pacific Forum, Working Paper No. 6, USP Sociological Society, 1986, pp. 18-19.

post-1835 Christian religion, replaced various forms of traditional Fijian religion and became grounded in the vanua. Matanitu is a Fijian word that denotes traditional government, and is associated with the country's three confederacies: Kubuna, Burebasaga, and Tovata."¹²⁹ Durutalo notes that the integration of vanua, lotu and matanitu provided legitimacy and recognition for indigenous chiefs in the colonial administrative system of indirect rule.

Durutalo argues that while the Great Council of Chiefs did not directly back the Soqosoqo ni Duavata ni Leweni Vanua Party (SDL) since 2001, the strength of the party in mustering indigenous Fijian support was based on its ability to co-opt vanua indigenous chiefs. The Great Council of Chiefs since its inception in 1875 played a major role in structuring indigenous Fijian social order and further positioned itself as an influential institution in post-independence Fiji when it was provided with permanent veto powers through its appointees to the Senate under the 1970 Constitution. Moreover, similar powers were vested in the body under the 1990 and the 1997 Constitutions. The hegemony of the indigenous dominated Alliance Party, the Soqosoqo ni Vakevulewa ni Taukei Party (SVT) and the SDL was directly related to the hegemony of the Great Council of Chiefs. Durutalo highlights that:

¹²⁹ Alumita Durutalo, "Defending the inheritance: the SDL and the 2006 election," Jon Fraenkel and Stewart Firth (eds), **From Election to Coup in Fiji**, (Canberra: Asia Pacific Press, 2007), p. 81; also see: Alumita Durutalo, "Of Roots and Off Shoots: Fijian Political Thinking, Dissent and the Formation of Political Parties (1960-1999), PhD Thesis, The Australian National University, Canberra, 2005, pp. 212-312.

While other Fijian parties have tried to embody these three pillars in their party identity in one way or another, the Alliance Party, the SVT and the SDL have successfully maintained the orthodoxy as a common rallying point for their Fijian supporters. During the era of the Alliance (1967–1987) and in the first half of SVT leadership (1991–1994), political unity under the *vanua*, *lotu* and *matanitu* were accepted as givens within Fijian society. Challenges by western-based political parties in the early 1960s were not extensive enough to pose a threat to chiefs in the Alliance Party.¹³⁰

Class Analysis

Class remains a powerful force in Fiji history, and this factor in Fiji was brought to light by William Sutherland.¹³¹ In class terms, a white bourgeoisie consisting of three distinct fractions-plantation capital, commercial capital, and a professional class-had begun to crystallise and shape Fiji's history in quite unique ways. Plantation capital did not only amplify the class relations in Fiji, but introduced a new ethnic category: Indian indentured labour. This new influx of immigrant labour had to be co-opted into the capitalist mode of production and this was achieved more through force than consensus. Apart from introducing a new ethnic category, commercial capital lay concentrated largely in the hands of the white bourgeoisie, who had throughout Fiji's colonial history influenced the commercial policies of the colonial administration. Sutherland

¹³⁰ Ibid, p. 82.

¹³¹ William Sutherland, "The State and Capitalist Development in Fiji," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Canterbury, 1984.

further argues that there emerged a privileged chiefly class within this capitalist mode of production. Such being the case, a contradiction was created between the chiefly class and the Fijian commoners. While this was essentially a Fijian phenomenon, Sutherland argues that "contradiction between capital and labour had a different racial face-capital was European, labour Fijian. Soon, however, labour would become predominantly Indian."¹³²

Robert Robertson developed Sutherland's approach arguing that understanding of class relations is essential if the nature of colonial rule and the various reactions to it are to be fully appreciated. According to Robertson:

It is not simply a matter of recording ethnic Fijian reactions or Indo-Fijian reactions, but also of probing chiefly-ethnic Fijian, peasant ethnic Fijian, petty bourgeoisie Indo-Fijian, and peasant Indo-Fijian reactions. Each reaction represented struggles between class interests, and an important determinant of outcomes was the response of the colonial state.¹³³

Robertson opted to look at the specifics within the overall class analytical framework as the complex interplay of class interests was also explored by 'Atu

¹³²William Sutherland, **Beyond the Politics of Race: An alternative history of Fiji to 1992**, Political and Social Change Monograph 15, Department of Political and Social Change, (Canberra: Australian National University, 1992), p.18.

¹³³R.T.Robertson, "Making New Histories of Fiji: The Choice Between Materialist Political Economy and Neo-Colonial Orthodoxy," **The Journal of Pacific Studies**, Volume 12, 1986, pp. 46-47.

Bain¹³⁴ who looked at the proletarianised ethnic indigenous Fijian labourers at the Vatukoula Gold Mines. She argued that there was essentially a "traditional" flavour to class, in particular for indigenous Fijians. The chiefly class could easily thwart any dissent from commoners or proletarians by asserting their traditional authority.

Unlike the Indo-Fijians, indigenous Fijians had to a large extent accepted the colonial orthodoxy. A majority of Indo-Fijians, in fact, were of a peasant class. Following the influx of free migrants after indenture and the subsequent establishment of Indian petit bourgeoisie, there were struggles along class lines. Indo-Fijians were far more class conscious than indigenous Fijians and at the same time Indo-Fijians were also more factionalised than their indigenous counterpart. Class antagonism led to strikes in 1920, 1921, 1943 and 1960. The strikes, most of which were against the authoritarianism and the monopoly power of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR), were an expression of resistance by the Indian peasant class. An important question was why the indigenous Fijians and the Indo-Fijians failed to form a broad class alliance during the colonial period, considering that both were oppressed by the dominant classes. Sutherland states that:

The ideology and practice of racialism perpetrated by the ruling class made a large section of the Fijian masses see themselves primarily as Indigenous Fijians rather than exploited people who shared with their

¹³⁴Atu Emberson Bain, **Labour and Gold in Fiji**, (Victoria: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

counterparts similar class interests.¹³⁵

Sutherland argues that the formation of class consciousness among indigenous Fijians was compromised because the colonial-supported indigenous administrative system worked as a mechanism for social control with the assistance of the indigenous Fijian chiefs, who were co-opted into the state machinery. In response to Sutherland's class analysis, Robert Norton raises two fundamental questions: "why popular consciousness in Fiji should be so powerfully shaped by race or ethnicity, and how might this imperative be reduced or contained? Norton argues that the class argument cannot explain why the colonial state decided to import workers from India rather than compel indigenous Fijians to provide labour for capitalism."¹³⁶

Race-Ethnic Analysis

As identified by Robert Norton, race and ethnicity played a major role in shaping popular consciousness in Fiji. In fact, race remains one of the most convenient categories used to explain political, economic and social conflicts in Fiji.

Ahmed Ali, Deryck Scarr and Asesela Ravuvu are the main proponents of the ethnic School, which explains political discourse by looking at racial formations

¹³⁵William Sutherland, **Beyond the Politics of Race**, pp. 31-32.

¹³⁶Robert Norton, "Book Review of William Sutherland's *Beyond the Politics of Race*," **The Contemporary Pacific**, Journal of Island Affairs, Vol 6, No.1, 1994, p. 242.

only. The race-ethnic School has its origins in colonial Fiji where colonial administrators manipulated the racial divide to secure both privilege and power. Ahmed Ali states that there are ethnic realities in Fiji which are based on and influenced by racial-ethnic aspirations. According to Ali, "racial awareness did not diminish. In all issues of significance, racial ethnicity remained in the forefront."¹³⁷ This racial-ethnic fact of Fiji has given rise to latent fears of domination by one ethnic group. For Ali, indigenous Fijians are prepared to share political power with other racial groups but will not relinquish it or subordinate it to the will of others. Indo-Fijians, seeing themselves as politically deprived, strive at least for a place of significant influence to consolidate their position and prevent the possibility of being disinherited.¹³⁸

Ali asserts that perhaps more revealing is the ongoing arrogant attitude of Indo-Fijians towards indigenous Fijians. He states that "the prejudice sprang from ignorance resulting from the lack of contact between the two races."¹³⁹ K.L. Gillion, however, defends Indo-Fijians by emphasising a number of problems faced by the community.

The problems of Indo-Fijians included their poverty, illiteracy, rootlessness, and loss of standards, unstable family life, lack of leadership, difficulty in acquiring land, the growth of divisions within the community, and an undefined identity and sense of belonging and

¹³⁷ Ahmed Ali, "Ethnicity and Politics," **The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology**, Vol.14, No.2, 1978, p. 149.

¹³⁸ Ibid, p. 153.

¹³⁹ Ahmed Ali, "Political Awareness Among Fiji Indo-Fijians 1879-1919," **Asian Profile**, Vol.6, No.5, 1978, p. 484.

acceptance in Fiji.¹⁴⁰

Timothy J. Macnaught¹⁴¹, while supporting Gillion, emphasises that the success of Indian labour in developing an export economy has given the indigenous Fijians the time they needed to absorb the impact of colonial rule, to arrest the steady decline in their numbers, and to enjoy the usual institutions that had given them the powerful voice in colonial policy. Brij Lal¹⁴² supports Macnaught's approach by emphasising that the importation of Indian labourers had helped preserve indigenous Fijian social structure in a rigidly codified and institutionalised form. The colonial policy of keeping the races separate resulted in the clash of cultures, especially when the two races were compelled to work together after independence.

For Ahmed Ali, the argument that Indo-Fijians have indirectly shielded indigenous Fijians from the destructive forces of plantation capitalism is largely a justification used by Indo-Fijians to claim political equality. On the one hundredth anniversary of the arrival of first indenture labourers in 1979, Ali summed up the future of Indo-Fijians: "Indo-Fijians will be left with two options: either leave Fiji or to serve on Fijian terms."¹⁴³ While Ali emphasised ethnicity

¹⁴⁰K.L.Gillion, **The Fiji Indo-Fijians: Challenge to European Dominance 1920-1946**, (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1977), p. 12.

¹⁴¹Timothy J. Macnaught, **The Fijian Colonial Experience: A Study of neotraditional Order under British Colonial Rule**, (Canberra: Australian National University, 1982), p. 2.

¹⁴²Brij V. Lal, **Girmitiyas: The Origins of the Fiji Indians**, (Canberra: The Journal of Pacific History, 1983), p. 8.

¹⁴³Ahmed Ali, "Indo-Fijians in Fiji: An Interpretation," Subramani (ed), **The Indo-Fijian Experience**, (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1979), p. 24.

as playing a dominant role in the daily lives of the people of Fiji, Deryck Scarr goes a step further in portraying Indo-Fijians as a community conspiring to gain political paramountcy. At first, according to Scarr, Indo-Fijians in Fiji sought political equality with the Europeans:

A 'fair field' meant political equality: as many Indo- Fijian seats in the Legislative Council and all seats elected from common not divided communal rolls. This was on the Ghandhian principle that separate electorates would separate hearts, presupposed mutual distrust and could only perpetuate differences and deepen conflicts of interest.¹⁴⁴

Scarr's work promotes the idea that Indo-Fijians are by nature cunning and deceptive, that they have no notable affection for Fiji and that they are troublesome and a threat to the indigenous Fijian race. By World War II, the Indo-Fijian population had overtaken that of the Indigenous Fijians and the events during the war hardened prejudices against the Indo-Fijians. Scarr states that agitation against the war was a grave error on the part of the Indo-Fijian leaders. According to Scarr, "indigenous Fijians had neither forgotten nor forgiven Indo-Fijians' refusal to defend Fiji unless given European rates of pay."¹⁴⁵ The belief that the refusal by the Indo-Fijians in Fiji to enlist for the Empire and the Commonwealth amounted to treason and a proof of disloyalty remains a powerful argument, which is often used by indigenous nationalists to

¹⁴⁴ Deryck Scarr, **Fiji: A Short History**, (North Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1984), p. 128.

¹⁴⁵ Deryck Scarr, **The History of the Pacific Islands: Kingdoms of the Reefs**, (Melbourne: The Macmillan Company of Australia LTD, 1990), p. 252.

support anti-Indo-Fijian propaganda. As a response to Scarr, historian Brij Lal defended the Indo-Fijian viewpoint arguing that:

The Indo-Fijians remembered indentured labour (girmit) and the racial humiliations and denigrations of everyday life. Fighting in the war to them meant fighting to uphold a system that was oppressive and humiliating.¹⁴⁶

Brij Lal's justification for the Indo-Fijian non-participation has been rejected by indigenous nationalists as nothing more than an excuse for Indo-Fijian disloyalty. In addition, Scarr often seeks to authenticate the 1874 Deed of Cession, the transfer of governance from the indigenous chiefs to the British Crown, as a symbolic partnership between the Europeans and the indigenous Fijians, while at the same he de-legitimises and attacks the Salisbury Dispatch¹⁴⁷ of 24 March, 1875, which granted equal citizenship rights to the Indian indentured labourers. For Scarr, the Salisbury Dispatch is nothing more than mythical charter of the immigrant and insecure Indo-Fijians.

Scarr remains the most authoritative voice on indigenous Fijian nationalist viewpoint. In his biography of the Bauan high chief Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna in 1980, Scarr romanticised and idealised the indigenous Fijian way of life by arguing that indigenous Fijians are far removed from the ideals of western

¹⁴⁶ Brij V. Lal, **Broken Waves: A History of the Fiji Islands in the Twentieth Century**, Pacific Islands Monograph Series No.11, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), p. 123.

¹⁴⁷ Deryck Scarr, **Fiji: Politics of Illusion: The Military Coups in Fiji**, (NSW: New South Wales University Press, 1988), p. 10.

democracy and live in communal harmony and as a result, indigenous Fijian are duty bound to preserve it. However, Scarr's protagonist, Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna, noted that for generations, the indigenous Fijians lived in a rigid autocracy of an oligarchic nature and the communalism of such a kind that the people individually owned no property, while their activities in every sphere of life were absolutely controlled.¹⁴⁸ Despite the rigidity and the hierarchy of the indigenous Fijian social system, Scarr supports actions by both the colonial administration, Ratu Sukuna and the indigenous nationalists to preserve and protect the indigenous way of life.

Scarr's ethnic-racial analysis was further developed by indigenous Fijian Asesela Ravuvu after the military coups of 1987. According to Ravuvu:

Indigenous Fijians generally perceive Indo-Fijians as mean and stingy, crafty and demanding to an extent of being considered greedy, inconsiderate and grasping, uncooperative, egoistic and calculating. Indo-Fijians, on the other hand, view indigenous Fijians as "jungalis" or bushwhackers, still behind the times and backward, naive and foolish, and generally poor. They are seen as lazy, proud and extravagant, foolish and undependable.¹⁴⁹

According to Ravuvu, the Salisbury Dispatch of 1875 was a colonial invention,

¹⁴⁸ Deryck Scarr, **Ratu Sukuna: Soldier, Statesman, Man of Two Worlds**, (London: Macmillan Education Limited, 1980), pp. 48-49.

¹⁴⁹ Asesela Ravuvu, **The Facade of Democracy: Fijian Struggles for Control 1830-1987**, (Suva: Reader Publishing House, 1991), p. 57.

and ethnic relations in Fiji must be governed by Taukei-Vulagi concept, where the Taukei indigenous Fijians are the rightful owners of land and political power, and Vulagis are ethnic Indo-Fijians, who are immigrants, landless and must be politically subordinated.

Ravuvu's ethnic argument is basically aimed at popularising the view that Fiji's political structure must serve the interest of the ruling indigenous classes, the wealthy indigenous Fijians, the chiefs and senior members of the bureaucracy. Like Scarr, Ravuvu also attacked western democracy as an alien imposition on indigenous Fijian chiefly tradition. The ethnic-racial analysis of Ravuvu is referred to as "nationalist revisionism" by David A. Chappell who states that:

Nationalist revisionism openly challenges the lingering Euro-centrism embedded in western scholarly methodologies. This revolt is particularly vocal in the Pacific island states where indigenous people feel the threat of "ethnocide" because they are outnumbered today by immigrant populations- which so far have produced the majority of Pacific island historians.¹⁵⁰

Nationalism has played a decisive role in Fiji, particularly after independence, and is founded upon and expresses the prevailing ethnic and cultural divisions. There were two types of nationalism. The first one, indigenous ethno-nationalism, drew inspiration from both overt and covert hate for the immigrant

¹⁵⁰ David A. Chappell, Active Agents Versus Passive Victims: Decolonized Historiography or Problematic Paradigm? in **The Contemporary Pacific**, A Journal of Island Affairs, Vol.7, No.2, 1995, p.317.

Indo-Fijian community and their leaders while the other was more a civic form of nationalism, which was defined against the colonial order and was expressed as anti-hegemonic sub-cultural movements during the colonial period. Political Sociologist, Steven Ratuva, argued that many academics and commentators totally dismiss the significance of nationalism within Fiji politics.¹⁵¹ Nationalist Revisionist academic John Davies argued that the 1987 coup marked an end of the dream that had sustained the Indo-Fijian community since the days of indenture, the dream of creating in these lands a home free of colonial yoke where their industry could flourish and where their culture and values would be second to none.¹⁵² But for Davies, indigenous Fijians are disadvantaged at a number of levels. When indigenous Fijians make submissions on constitution, they are poorly articulated and lack the resources of the Indian diaspora in crafting documents that captured their real objectives in language compatibility with acceptable constitutional expression.¹⁵³

Davies is instructive when he states that indigenous Fijians do not want simply to be equal to Indo-Fijians but have difficulty pursuing their claim. Unlike other nationalist Revisionists, Davies recommends a pragmatic solution for the people of Fiji.

¹⁵¹ Steven Ratuva, "The Fijian Power Struggle, *Fijilive*, 10 November 2000. Also see Steven Ratuva, "Addressing Inequality? Economic Affirmative Action and Communal Capitalism in Post-Coup Fiji," A. Haroon Akram Lodhi (ed), **Confronting Fiji's Futures**, (Canberra Asia Pacific Press, 2000), pp. 226-248.

¹⁵² John E. Davies, "Ethnic Competition and Forging of the Nation-State of Fiji," **The Round Table**, Volume 94, No. 1, January 2005, p. 54.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 56.

For Indigenous Fijians, a less aggressive promotion of ethnic entitlements and greater commitment to, and support for, education and application is certainly needed. Among Indo-Fijians, a less insistent demand for absolute 'equality' at all levels and a more welcoming embrace of the culture and values of the country their great grandparents freely chose to make their home are long overdue.¹⁵⁴

Other nationalist Revisionists are less accommodating than Davies, Robert Churney¹⁵⁵ labelled Indo-Fijians as "colonisers", bent on destroying indigenous culture. Churney argues that the location of Indo-Fijians in the Indian diaspora and in particular their links with the Indian subcontinent makes them a culturally dominant group compared with indigenous Fijians. As a result, Churney argues that Indo-Fijians would like to turn Fiji into a "little India" and as a result indigenous Fijian nationalist militancy is justified.

Ethnic Economics

Some ethno-historians have applied the ethnic-race concept to Fiji economy. According to Fisk, there is a racial pattern to economic activity in Fiji¹⁵⁶. The picture that emerges is roughly that of a three-tier society in which the European and Chinese groups manage and operate the large corporations and

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 70.

¹⁵⁵ Robert Churney, "Palagi Island Report", **Pacific Island Report**, 14 September 2001.

¹⁵⁶ E.K. Fisk, **The Political Economy of Independent Fiji**, (Wellington: A.H.& A.W. Reed Ltd, 1970).

institutions, often on behalf of foreign owners, while the Indo-Fijians own and operate most of the medium to small scale enterprises, including most of the commercial farming, and the Indigenous Fijians own most of the land in a non-monetary, but affluent, subsistence sector.¹⁵⁷

Fisk's thesis struck a responsive note among ethnic historians, who used the three-Fiji argument in support of their pro-ethnic agenda. Like ethnic historians, Fisk argued that there was a conflict of interest¹⁵⁸ between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians. This was reflected in the Indo-Fijian struggles for better land leases and the indigenous Fijian fears of Indo-Fijian political control.

From a different perspective, Nii K. Plange challenged the three-Fiji thesis.

Available historical evidence indicates that Fisk's argument that race and ethnic differences between the categories are of great political significance and vital to the use of political power is untenable. The unfolding of political processes in Fiji from the middle of the last century demonstrates the very opposite, which is that political and economic power have been used, sometimes with attendant violence, to affect the contemporary group differences...¹⁵⁹

For Plange, the racial and ethnic differentials in Fiji are socio-historically

¹⁵⁷Ibid, p. 42.

¹⁵⁸Ibid, pp. 47-48.

¹⁵⁹Nii K. Plange, "The 'Three Fiji's' Thesis: A Critical Examination of a Neo-Empiricist-Naturalistic Analysis of Fiji's Polity," **The Journal of Pacific Studies**, Vol. 15, 1990, p. 19.

constructed. Specifically, he argues that the political instruments of the colonial state restructured indigenous mode of production and articulated it with a capitalist one. While Plange analysed racial-ethnic dichotomy in Fiji purely as a colonial construct, for economist Ganesh Chand,¹⁶⁰ Fisk's idea, that Indo-Fijians are a privileged middle class, is a myth. According to Chand, Indo-Fijians in Fiji remain predominantly an agricultural community with a notable exception of a few that dominate business or are in the civil service. Chand notes that Indo-Fijians were historically deprived by the colonial regime, especially in the field of education, since it was the view of the colonists that Indo-Fijians should remain in the sugar cane fields.

Racial Discourse in Perspective

Racial stereotypes and separate communal institutions help perpetuate the belief that separate communities can promote and secure their own traditions, customs, identity and way of life. The concept of being separate is colonial in origin and discourages cross-ethnic discourse. Equally, the historical record suggests considerable fluidity in racialised political categories. Firstly, cross-ethnic alliances posed a threat to the colonial government. Indo-Fijians being both proletarianised and politicised by indenture and political developments in India, according to the colonial myth, had the potential to infect the indigenous Fijians with the rebellion virus of the diaspora. Secondly, the colonial

¹⁶⁰Ganeshwar Chand, "Race and Regionalism in Fiji, Pacific and India: Some Generally-held Misconceptions," **Economic and Political Weekly**, January 20, 1990, p. 167.

government from the very outset did not discourage any changes to the indigenous Fijian communal way of life, and thus a protective native policy was established to shield the indigenous Fijians from destructive forces of western capitalism and expansionism.

Anthropological studies¹⁶¹ have produced conflicting claims as to the social structure of pre-contact indigenous Fijians. John Clammer¹⁶² in his seminal work stated that there is evidence that Fijian social structure was created by the colonial government in the late nineteenth century. The whole process was aided by missionaries and planters. Racial biases and prejudices may have emanated from the new neo-traditional order consciously created and sustained by the colonial government with the assistance and influence of collaborator indigenous Fijian chiefs. Colonialism, thus, played a significant role in both containing and discouraging cross-ethnic alliances. Whatever contact that did take place between the two races was cursory as social separateness reinforced communal identity and grouping.

Indigenous Fijians, unlike Indo-Fijians, tend to be less fractious due to the social cohesiveness of their communal order. Communalism, then, is what binds the indigenous Fijians together and helps create and reinforce the ideology of indigeneity and cultural bloc. Dissension is uncommon since there

¹⁶¹ Marshall Sahlins, **Moala: Nature and Culture on a Fijian Island**, (Ann Arbor, 1962).

¹⁶² John R. Clammer, "Colonialism and the Perception of Tradition in Fiji," Talal Asad (ed), **Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter**, (London: Ethaca Press, 1973), p. 200.

is an unwritten customary code which guides indigenous politics within the village, and within larger social and cultural discourses. Everyone has their respective position and place in the indigenous Fijian society, and everyone respect each other with the redeeming quality of the village life being that there is a general absence of malice, ill will and hostility. Conflict, in the Fijian society, is resolved through customary means of *matanigasau* or *Bulubulu*.¹⁶³ On the Indo-Fijian side, however, there is a general lack of dispute-resolving mechanisms, and often petty disputes get out of hand, ending up in court. After the end of indenture in 1920, Indo-Fijians split into rival class and religious groups and these divisions have been exploited by Indo-Fijian leaders during general elections. Indigenous Fijians on the other hand are deeply emotional about their land.

In Fiji, land is a centre of dispute and has been so since the arrival of the Europeans. The Great Council of Chiefs, after its inauguration, had protested against Europeans who, through deception, acquired land from the indigenous Fijians. Land to the indigenous Fijians hold deep customary and emotional value. For Indigenous Fijians, the chiefs, land, people and the government are all connected to one originating spirit. This inter-connectedness explains the indigenous Fijian social and political discourses as one based upon the customs of respect. The indigenous Fijian socio-political order, however, has been challenged by Revisionist scholars who emphasise that the dominance of eastern chiefly kingdoms and the Great Council of Chiefs, which enhanced the

¹⁶³Andrew Arno, "Conflict Management in a Fijian Village," Ph.D Thesis, Harvard University, 1974.

structural power of the chiefs, who strategically positioned themselves to takeover politically from the colonial administration after independence.

The Fijian socio-political system consists of Mataqali, i-tokatoka, Yavusa, and Matanitu. The configurations of chiefdoms or Matanitu which became typical of power configurations in north-eastern Viti Levu and Lomaiviti, Taveuni and eastern Vanua Levu, and the Lau Islands during the nineteenth century had their origins in pre-capitalist Fijian society.¹⁶⁴ Academics have argued about the authenticity of the Mataqali, i-tokatoka, Yavusa and Matanitu system and of the chiefly system in general. According to Geoffrey White,¹⁶⁵ self conscious constructions of tradition emerged under conditions of colonisation. These indigenous Fijian traditions and cultural institutions survived in a neo-traditional form after European intrusion. The Fijian administration and the Great Council of Chiefs were created to compliment the colonial indirect rule and to provide some form of cultural continuity from pre-Cession Fiji.

Revisionist Historians

Revisionist historians were re-visiting the colonial history of Fiji¹⁶⁶ and more importantly, these historians started to critically analyse indigenous Fijian and

¹⁶⁴Tim Bayliss-Smith, Richard Bedford, Harold Brookfield, and Marc Latham, **Islands, Islanders and the World: The Colonial and Post-colonial experience of Eastern Fiji**, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 48.

¹⁶⁵Geoffrey White, "The Discourse of Chiefs: Notes on a Melanesian Society," **The Contemporary Pacific**, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1992, p. 76.

¹⁶⁶R.A.Derrick, **A Short History of Fiji Volume One**, (Suva: Government Printer, 1950).

Indo-Fijian cultures. The Revisionist scholars writing since independence of Fiji in 1970 critically examined the work of previous scholars on Fiji, challenging their findings. While British colonialists accepted and reinforced the Mataqali, i-tokatoka, Yavusa and Matanitu as the widely accepted indigenous Fijian tradition, Revisionist scholars challenged such notions. Revisionist historian Nicholas Thomas noted that "in western Viti Levu, there was no unit which corresponded to the Yavusa. Where such units did exist, they were not strictly defined descent groups, and did not necessarily correspond to corporate groups, residence units, or political entities."¹⁶⁷

One of the most important Revisionist historians was Peter France¹⁶⁸, who challenged the analysis of two of his predecessors, G.K. Roth¹⁶⁹ and Cyril Belshaw.¹⁷⁰ For France, the Fijian administration was a new mode of social control that incorporated the chiefs. The whole colonial machinery including its native component was designed in such a way as to strengthen British indirect rule. In addition, there was a misconception, especially among representatives of the imperial power, with respect to indigenous Fijian "custom" and "tradition." In a seminal work on Fiji's first Governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, France criticised him for conceptualising indigenous Fijians culture within the ambit of the evolutionary theory. According to France, "Gordon based his native policy on

¹⁶⁷Nicholas Thomas, **Planets Around the Sun**, Oceania Monograph No.31, University of Sydney, 1986, pp. 12-13.

¹⁶⁸Peter France, **The Charter of the Land: Custom and Colonization in Fiji**, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1969).

¹⁶⁹G.K.Roth, **Fijian Way of Life**, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1953).

¹⁷⁰Cyril S. Belshaw, **Under the Ivi Tree: Society and Economic Growth in Rural Fiji**, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964).

the preservation of the basic institutions of the indigenous Fijian society; the nature of these institutions was not known to him, not from careful observation in Fiji, but from the recognition that all societies at Fiji's stage of development from savagery to civilisation have the same characteristics."¹⁷¹ Gordon's indigenous policy required that indigenous Fijians should retain control of a great deal of the land in the colony in order to develop slowly in accordance with their own traditional institutions. This protective colonial policy towards indigenous Fijians became the new colonial orthodoxy, and educated members of the Fijian society were urged to join their European mentors in their efforts to continue with such a policy.

The work of Peter France influenced both Simione Durutalo and Michael Howard, who analysed the role of the indigenous Fijian chiefly elite. The indigenous Fijian elite had its origins in eastern Fiji, thus Howard uses the term "eastern Fijian oligarchy."¹⁷² Both Howard and Durutalo argue that a powerful indigenous group rose to pre-eminence before the cession of Fiji by forming an alliance with the European settler community and after independence, the direct descendants of this group continued to control the political affairs of the state.¹⁷³ The eastern Fijian oligarchy thesis attempts to link up the power and

¹⁷¹ France, **Charter of the Land**, p. 127.

¹⁷² Michael C. Howard, **Fiji: Race and Politics in an Island State**, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1991), p .6.

¹⁷³ The eastern chiefly oligarchy thesis is also developed by Stephanie Lawson, **Failure of Democratic Politics in Fiji**, (Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 1991); also see Judith A. Bennett, "Holland, Britain and Germany in Melanesia" K.R. Howe, Robert C. Kiste and Brij V. Lal (eds), **Tides of History: The Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century**, (NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1994); Rory Ewins, **Colour, Class and Custom The Literature of the 1987 Coups**,

influence of eastern Fiji with contemporary Fijian politics. Others have taken a similar approach but emphasised the fluidity of political and cultural hierarchies. John Dunham Kelly¹⁷⁴ and Martha Kaplan¹⁷⁵ drew on the works of Mikhail Bakhtin and Marshall Sahlins and frame their study of colonial Fiji as a study of contending discourses. For Kelly, Indo-Fijian counter-colonial discourse was based on the Hindu philosophy of bhakti (devotion) and Ghandian non-violence whereas Kaplan analysed counter-colonial discourse through indigenous Fijian cult movements. Both Kelly and Kaplan demonstrated the religious basis for rebellion against the colonial authority. Sherry Other states that both Kelly and Kaplan insist on the thickness of the cultural process in play in colonial 'zones of transcourse' where 'multiple grammars operate through contingently categorised people.' The result is complex but shifting loyalties and alliances and above all shifting categories, as British, indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians contended for power, resources and legitimacy.¹⁷⁶ In his work on cultural hierarchies, Martha Kaplan analysed the power of resistance of the Tuka Movement, an anti-hegemonic sub-cultural movement that emerged as a response to colonialism. For Kaplan, "the dangerous and disaffected native, in the colonial orthodoxy, traduced custom by asserting illegitimate authority."¹⁷⁷

Research School of Pacific Studies, (Canberra: Australian National University, 1992).

¹⁷⁴John Dunham Kelly, "Bhakti and the Spirit if Capitalism," Ph. D. thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago, 1988.

¹⁷⁵Martha Kaplan, "Land and Sea and the New White Men: A Reconsideration of the Fijian Tuka Movement," Ph. D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1988.

¹⁷⁶Sherry B. Other, "Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic refusal," **Comparative Studies in Society and History**, Vol. 37, No. 1, 1995, pp. 182-183.

¹⁷⁷Martha Kaplan, "Land and Sea and the New White Men: A Reconsideration of the Fijian Tuka Movement," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1988,

According to Kaplan, “in 1887 the British colonial government of Fiji passed a regulation against “luve ni wai, kalou rere and kindred practices” which they believed to be rituals that were rebellious, secretive and led by charlatans.”¹⁷⁸ Kaplan further argues that in their nineteenth century encounter the colonial administration and the indigenous Fijians constructed each other in terms of their own, quite different cultural systems. John Dunham Kelly on the other hand showed how religious beliefs among Fiji’s Hindus shaped counter-colonial discourse and cultural hierarchy among Indo-Fijians.

Following the May 2000 coup, further revisions were made to Fijian history. The themes of indigenous political disunity, indigenous political order, Indo-Fijian passive resistance and tensions between constitutional government and nationalism were emphasised by Brij Lal, John Kelly, Martha Kaplan and Stephanie Lawson. Brij Lal argued that if the 1987 coups were about shoring up Fijian power and preserving Fijian political unity, the 2000 coup had the effect of fostering indigenous Fijian political fragmentation on an unprecedented scale.¹⁷⁹ Kelly and Kaplan¹⁸⁰ noted the role of political power in ethnic and cultural conflict in Fiji. According to Kelly, “in Fiji, a coup is a borrowed means to a very local end, the undermining of order a vital part of establishing it.”¹⁸¹

p. 141.

¹⁷⁸ Martha Kaplan, “Luve Ni Wai as the British Saw It: Constructions of Custom and Disorder in Colonial Fiji,” **Ethnohistory**, Vol. 36, No. 4, 1989, pp. 349-350.

¹⁷⁹ Brij Lal, “Chiefs and Thieves and other people Besides: The Making of the George Speight Coup,” **The Journal of Pacific History**, Volume 35, No. 3, 2000, p. 281.

¹⁸⁰ John D. Kelly and Martha Kaplan, **Represented Communities: Fiji and the World De-colonisation**, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

¹⁸¹ John D. Kelly, “Boycotts and Coups, Shanti and Mana in Fiji,” **Ethnohistory**,

Kelly further states the Indo-Fijian universalism of non-violent protest has Gandhian anti-modernist roots, “grounded very much in a substantive justice of Bhakti devotional egalitarianism.”¹⁸² Stephanie Lawson on the other hand maintains that the story of politics since independence in Fiji is, at least on the surface, one of ongoing tension between ethnic Fijian nationalism on the one hand and an effort to maintain broad based constitutional rule on the other.¹⁸³ Fiji, for Lawson, was hardly a model for liberal constitutionalism; rather, its social and political institutions reflected generations of colonial-style policy making.

Within the Revisionist School, there were social justice theorists like Father Kevin Barr and indigenous activist and the former head of the Methodist Church, Iliaitia Tuwere. According to Barr, any legitimate fears of indigenous Fijians need to be clearly identified and seriously addressed.¹⁸⁴ Tuwere analysed the role of the Methodist church in cementing Fijian nationalism and questioned the lack of progress in identifying the real issues behind the coups of 1987 and 2000 and noted that the social situation of indigenous Fijians was ignored by indigenous political leaders and the community was challenged to reconcile global standards of human rights against the specific Fijian

Vol. 52, No. 1, 2005, p. 22.

¹⁸² Ibid, p. 25.

¹⁸³ Stephanie Lawson, “Nationalism vs Constitutionalism in Fiji,” **Nations and Nationalism**, Vol. 10, No. 4, 2004, p. 520.

¹⁸⁴ Kevin J. Barr, **The Church and Fijian Ethnocentrism: An Adventure in Religious History and Sociology**, (Suva: Ecumenical Centre for Research and Education and Advocacy, 2002), p. 21.

situation.¹⁸⁵

More recently Revisionist thinkers Alumita Durutalo¹⁸⁶ and Jone Dakuvula¹⁸⁷ challenged the notion of indigenous Fijian political unity and argued that Fiji was driven by provincial power politics that used ethnicity to affect political control by the indigenous Fijian elite. Similar challenges to indigenous unity have been highlighted by Robert Nicole, who reconstructed the first 40 years of colonial rule through stories and voices that interrupt the chorus of dominant cultural and historical world views.¹⁸⁸ According to Nicole, the evidence presented in his thesis “supports the view that ordinary people, even when they were marginalized, retain considerable agency to fashion their lives in ways not entirely controlled by the dominant. While their actions may not seem spectacular or revolutionary, they displace the unified image of Fiji and Fijians as obedient, submissive beings living an idyllic life under the supervision of chiefs and the tutelage of benevolent colonial officials.”¹⁸⁹

As noted earlier Alumita Durutalo defined the parameters of indigenous Fijian political discourse within vanua, lotu and Matanitu. In the same spirit, Matt

¹⁸⁵ Ilaitia Tuwere, “Statement of the Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma on the armed seizure of Government” in Brij V. Lal and Michael Pretes (ed), **Coup: Reflections on the Political Crisis in Fiji**, (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2001), p. 172.

¹⁸⁶ Alumita Durutalo, “Provincialism and the Crisis of Indigenous Fijian Political Unity”, MA Thesis, University of the South Pacific, 1997.

¹⁸⁷ Jone Dakuvula, “Protecting Fijian Interest in a Democratic Fiji”, Citizens’ Constitutional Forum (CCF), Suva, Fiji, 2001.

¹⁸⁸ Robert Nicole, “Disturbing History: Aspects of Resistance in Early Colonial Fiji,” PhD Thesis, University of Canterbury, 2006, p. 400.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 301.

Tomlinson, argues that lotu, vanua and matanitu are “three entities that are equally weighted in Fijian discourse. We might also imagine that Church, Chiefs and Government are considered equal partners in social life”.¹⁹⁰ The most important contribution of Tomlinson to the Revisionist School is her insightful analysis of the “Deed of Sovereignty” document, which was formulated by the Native Land Trust Board at the height of the George Speight coup in 2000. According to Tomlinson, the “Deed of Sovereignty” document vests vanua with certain kind of political force: “political, emotional, and metacultural. Defining the vanua expansively as ‘the chiefs, our tribes, their land, their waters and seas and other possessions,’ the authors cast vanua in the role of both threatened and lost, something in need of reclamation and redemption.”¹⁹¹

Similarly, Winston Halapua sees modern Fiji politics in terms of vanua, lotu (religion) and militarism. According to Halapua, the vanua is symbolised by the Great Council of Chiefs, lotu by the Methodist Church of Fiji and bati (warrior tradition) by the military.¹⁹² Halapua notes that “the modern Fiji Military Forces protected the aspirations of chiefs of Fiji as it got woven into the emerging capitalist system.”¹⁹³ Halapua’s thesis recognises that militarism is an integral part of the lotu, vanua and the matanitu. He notes that “chiefly leadership and military leadership are intertwined in Fiji, and many chiefs have accepted that

¹⁹⁰ Matt Tomlinson, “Sacred Soil of Kadavu, Fiji,” ***Oceania***, Vol. 72, No. 4, 2002, p. 238.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, p. 245.

¹⁹² Winston Halapua, ***Tradition, Lotu and Military in Fiji***, (Lautoka: Fiji Institute of Applied Studies, 2003), p. 104.

¹⁹³ Ibid, p. 105.

military service is integral to their leadership capabilities and acceptability.

Indeed a high percentage of the high-ranking military officers in Fiji have been, and continue to be, of chiefly status or ancestry.”¹⁹⁴

Relevance of the Revisionist School

The Revisionist approach has relevance to my analytical themes which were developed in Chapter 1 using the neo-Gramscian analytical framework.

According to one of the themes, in Fiji, the discourse between culture and ethnicity shaped political hegemony and anti-hegemony/counter-hegemony during colonial and post-colonial periods.

A similar theme was used by I.C. Campbell in 2005 to explore the nature, causes and significance of the Samoan protest movement (anti-hegemony), including status rivalry between chiefs.¹⁹⁵ Campbell highlights that the plans of the colonial regime in Samoa were largely influenced by the “need to reconcile or control the relationship between populations that were differently constituted. Although ethnic differences were often conceived in racial and biological terms, the essential difference was cultural, and this was understood by the contemporaries.”¹⁹⁶ Besides Campbell, Robert Nicole used similar themes when analysing resistance against the cultural hegemony of the indigenous chiefs and the colonial government in Fiji. Nicole highlighted various resistance

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ I.C. Campbell, “Resistance and Colonial Government,” **The Journal of Pacific History**, Vol. 40, No. 1, 2005, p. 47.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 66.

movements, which I analyse as anti-hegemonic sub-cultural movements during the colonial period in Chapter 4.

My other theme of the role of the military in hegemony and counter-hegemony was utilised by Winston Halapua who looked at the relationship between the indigenous polity, religion and militarism. While Halapua does not conceptualise the military as counter-hegemonic, he, nevertheless, acknowledges the role of the military in shaping Fijian polity. This acknowledgement by Halapua serves as an important political marker because since the 2006 coup, the Fiji military has re-ordered the indigenous society by restructuring the relationship between the military, the church and the Fijian polity.¹⁹⁷ It should be noted that hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony are specific conjunctures of history¹⁹⁸ and the neo-Gramscian analytical framework established in Chapter 1 will assist in re-evaluating Fiji's political past. More importantly, recent analysis of Samoan protest movements, indigenous Fijian resistance in colonial Fiji and the role of the military in Fijian polity demonstrate a growing appreciation by Pacific historians of the role played by ethnicity and culture in shaping counter-colonial discourses.

The neo-Gramscian model of hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony developed in this thesis is supported by the neo-Gramscian analytical themes of the role of colonial legacy, ethnicity, culture and the

¹⁹⁷ Esteve Morera, "Gramsci and Democracy," **Canadian Journal of Political Science**, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1990, p. 34.

¹⁹⁸ Asok Sen, "Weber, Gramsci and Capitalism," **Social Scientist**, Vol. 13, No. 1, 1985, pp. 15-16.

military in hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony and these are applied to both colonial and post-colonial material history, thus providing a unique analytical framework which had not existed in the past. Moreover, the richness of the model and the themes allow for the analysis of either historical or future events in Fiji or elsewhere in the Pacific.

Conclusion

Dependency and the World System Schools, detailed in Chapter 1, provided Fiji analysts with the conceptual tools to analyse economic under-development and internal colonialism in Fiji. However, these approaches did not take into consideration the role of culture and ethnicity in shaping colonial and post-colonial political discourses. Fiji's nationalist scholars on the other hand took into consideration ethnicity but continued to use the "colonial" framework of analysing Indo-Fijians as a threat to indigenous interests.

The colonial concept of culture and ethnicity was challenged in post-colonial Fiji by Revisionist scholars who questioned colonial formations and analysed the underlying social structures of ethnic conflict, indigenous chiefly dominance and militarism. More recently, Revisionist scholars, I. C. Campbell, Robert Nicole and Winston Halapua, appreciated the role played by culture and ethnicity in shaping anti-colonial protest movements and in particular, the role of the military in post-colonial societies.

Keeping with the tradition of the Revisionist School, I develop similar themes in Chapter 1 using neo-Gramscian theory. My themes allows for the analyses of the role of colonial culture in hegemony, the centrality of ethnicity and culture in shaping colonial and post-colonial political hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony, and the changing role of the Fiji military in the post-colonial context. These themes are repeated throughout Part 2 of the thesis and from Chapter 3, where social forces are examined in the formation of the colonial historic bloc, which struggled to maintain its hegemony due to internal divisions and conflict.

Part 2

CHAPTER 3

THE COLONIAL HISTORIC BLOC

In Fiji, the colonial historic bloc, after the cession of the islands to Britain in 1874, struggled to maintain hegemony in the face of internal conflict and protests from indigenous sub-cultural forces and ethnic conflict from 1879 due to three-way power struggle between the Europeans, the indigenous Fijian chiefs and the Indo-Fijians. Moreover, the cultural hegemony of the indigenous Fijian chiefs formed a significant part of the colonial historic bloc and aided in the establishment of indirect rule. The cultural hegemony of the indigenous chiefs after cession was a continuation of the cultural hegemony of the kingdom of Bau, which established itself as a powerful polity in the eastern part of Fiji and imposed its political hegemony on the rest of the islands through war and political alliances.

Pre-Cession Fiji

The Rise of Bau

Traditional indigenous Fijian society operated within a lineage mode of production, but the whole social, economic and production structures were changed by the intrusion of mercantile as well as plantation agriculture

capitalism.¹⁹⁹ Even before European contact, eastern Fiji had largely been influenced by its Polynesian neighbours, in particular Tonga which established its political hegemony in the region through trade, military alliances and marriage. The Tongan influence did not drastically alter the existing social structure of eastern Fiji, but it did reinforce rigid hierarchy along patrilineal descent lines. Eastern Fiji became the contact point for the regional hegemonic powers as well as the European world system and between 1790 and 1820, sandalwood, a highly-prized commodity in the Orient was exploited by European traders. In Fiji, the first sandalwood traders touched at Koro in eastern Fiji between 1803 and 1808. Soon ships from Port Jackson were competing with others from the New England coast of America for sandalwood trade, and a commercial relationship was established with indigenous Fijian chiefs, who provided Europeans with indigenous labour. This effectively restructured Fijian cultural and social production structures. According to Durutalo in the early nineteenth century, trade between the Europeans and indigenous Fijians flourished. Durutalo notes that:

There was a progression in the introduction and popularity of most trade goods which reflected the increasing technological sophistication of the Melanesians, although fish hooks and beads were always in demand. Hoop iron was replaced by cheap tomahawks, which inturn were replaced by good ones. Firearms were expensive and late. Certain articles favoured in one location were useless for trade in the other. The

¹⁹⁹Simione Durutalo, **Paramountcy of Political Interest and the Politicization of Ethnicity**, South Pacific Forum Working Paper No.6, USP Sociological Society, 1986, p. 10.

demands for pigs, tortoise shell, and other island products increased the complexity of trading in Melanesia as captains shopped around to get the best product to trade for sandalwood in a particular place.²⁰⁰

The organisation of indigenous Fijian labour for the acquisition of sandalwood disrupted the indigenous Fijian way of life. Many young indigenous Fijian men lost their life in fierce fights with rival groups over sandalwood stands. During the sandalwood boom, the Europeans had introduced a lethal western technology to Fiji in the form of firearms. In 1808, American vessel "Eliza" hit a reef and sank off Bua Bay. On board the wreck was a large quantity of firearms which one of the survivors, a Swede named Charles Savage, used it to his advantage by organising a band of twenty mercenaries, and forming an alliance with the chiefdom of Bau. In due course, other Europeans came to Fiji until every important indigenous chief sought to attract a European who could mend muskets and cast bullets.²⁰¹ For the chiefdom of Bau in particular, guns became a symbol of power and status.

Internal cultural conflict was common among indigenous Fijians. In 1829, for instance, the Vunivalu of Bau, Ratu Naulivau, died and was succeeded by his younger brother Tanoa, who had to soon flee to Rewa after being deposed by a faction of the Bauan chiefs. Tanoa returned back to Bau in 1837 after his

²⁰⁰Ernest S. Dodge, **Islands and Empires: Western Impact on the Pacific and East Asia**, (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), p.159.

²⁰¹R.A.Derrick, **The Fiji Islands: A Geographical Handbook**, (Suva: Government Printer, 1951), p. 132.

enemies were defeated at the hands of his son, Ratu Seru Cakobau,²⁰² who emerged from the conflict as an aspiring warrior and a chief. But one of the rebellious kingdoms, Rewa, remained defiant and in 1843 Rewa warriors attacked the Bauan tributary of Suva and murdered more than a hundred people. That same year, the conflict between Bau and Rewa escalated when chief Tanoa's wife fled to Rewa. A full scale war between Bau and Rewa and the subsequent capitulation of Rewa, on 9 February 1855, was symbolic in the sense that Ratu Seru Cakobau emerged from the war as the paramount warrior and the leader of eastern Fiji. In 1850, Cakobau had already acquired a major part of coastal Fiji and also acquired the title, of "Tui Viti" (the King of Fiji), which achieved widespread currency among European residents of Levuka.²⁰³

Besides struggles for power among competing political blocs, the Christian mission in Fiji was having difficulty in converting indigenous Fijians. King George of Tonga who had converted to Christianity demanded that Wesleyan Missionaries be allowed to preach their faith without fear and hindrance. In 1854, Cakobau renounced the old religion and accepted Christianity and further attempted to strengthen economic and political relationship with Tonga. In fact, the canoe trade with Tonga was of great importance to Bau, since it had a

²⁰²Cakobau was born in 1817. See R.A. Derrick, **A History of Fiji Volume One**, (Suva: Government Printer, 1946), p. 55.

²⁰³ John Sourway, "Maafu's word in the Hills," **The Journal of Pacific History**, Vol. 39, No. 1, 2004, p. 3. In 1852, chief Tanoa died and Ratu Seru Cakobau was installed as the new chief, but his position was still under threat. Cakobau's main rivals were Ratu Mara, a powerful Bauan chief and the great grandson of Tui Nayau and Tongan chief Ma'afu, the son of King George of Tonga, who requested Cakobau to renounce the pagan tradition of old Fiji and adopt Christianity. Tongan chief Maafu had established himself in Lau since 1847 and was positioned to achieve political hegemony over the entire group

number of skilled craftsmen who designed canoes that were of a far superior quality to the ones used by the Polynesians. Cakobau sought to build on the trade and promised the Tongan monarch, King George, to build canoes for his warriors.

In 1855, a fleet of Tongan warriors came to get their canoes as promised by Cakobau. At the time, Ratu Mara, the principal rival of Cakobau, had mustered a sizeable force of Fijian warriors and was blockading Bau. The Tongan warriors that had come to get their canoes lay under siege, six miles east of Bau in a finger-like strait called Kaba. On 7 April 1855, the heavily armed Tongans broke the siege and routed the forces of Mara: "it was reported that Mara escaped crying and up to 180 of his warriors were slaughtered. Immediately after the Tongan victory, some seventy towns submitted to Bau."²⁰⁴

The Tongan intervention was of crucial importance to the balance of political power in Fiji. In essence, the battle of Kaba consolidated Bauan hegemony and heralded a new era in Fiji.²⁰⁵ According to Vicki Darling:

The fall of Kaba heralded the collapse of the rebellion against Bau as various rebel districts sued for peace and once again recognised

²⁰⁴W.P.Morrell, **Britain in the Pacific**, (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 128.

²⁰⁵In discussions with late Simione Durutalo in 1993, he stated that modern indigenous Fijian history starts after the Battle of Kaba, which helped entrench Bauan hegemony.

Cakobau's authority over them. The victory of Christian forces is supposed to have sparked mass conversions of some 20,000 Indigenous Fijians.²⁰⁶

While internal struggles for political hegemony are crucial for the understanding of balance of power in eastern Fiji before Cession, there was, nonetheless, an equally important external ethnic force in the form of Europeans and missionaries. As stated earlier, guns had played an important role in increasing the structural power of Bau. While guns and Europeans had both psychological and physical effect, the social and cultural transformation triggered by European contact reached a full circle with the introduction of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission via Tonga. According to Basil Thomson, the first blow to the power of the indigenous chiefs was struck unconsciously by the missionaries.²⁰⁷

In 1835, Reverend William Cross and David Cargill, enlightened by their missionary zeal, brought Christianity to Fiji. A mission was opened in Somosomo Taveuni in 1839, followed by one in Vanua Levu in 1847, Levuka in 1851 and in Bau in 1854. The Wesleyan mission opened up the gateway for other Christian denominations and in 1844 French Catholic Marists established a mission in Lakeba. However, the Catholics were not well received by the indigenous Fijian chiefs and were forced to move to Namuka Island. But the

²⁰⁶Vicki Darling, "Cakobau and the Fijian Cession Crisis 1858-1862," BA Honours Thesis, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand, 1983, p.22.

²⁰⁷Basil Thomson, **The Indigenous Fijians: A Study of the Decay of Custom**, (London: Dawson of Pall Mall, 1968), p.64.

spirit of the Catholic priests remained high despite some initial setback.

The Christian religion established an organic link between Europeans and indigenous Fijians. In the neo-Gramscian sense, religion had become the ideological and cultural tool through which the "souls" of indigenous Fijians were colonised. The traditional authority of the indigenous Fijian priest (bete) was undermined as Christian missionaries over-time replaced the traditional indigenous religion and established a doctrine of a higher authority than that of indigenous chiefs. The psychological impact of the new religion was highly significant, but as later Chapters will note, not all indigenous Fijians would accept the new religion or the colonial culture, and fragments of old beliefs were transformed into anti-colonial and anti-chief sub-cultural discourses.

In the Fiji context, the traditional Fijian social structure was flexible enough to absorb the new religion without undermining the customary authority of the chiefs, who continued to play a dominant role in their society. Bau stood out since Cakobau's conversion to Christianity did not dilute his political authority. Moreover, for Cakobau, it was politically expedient to convert to the new religion and in the process won the favour of Tonga.

Road to Cession

The victory at Kaba had consolidated Bauan hegemony, but Cakobau's authority did not extend to the Europeans who viewed him with suspicion and

contempt. An unfortunate incident on Fourth of July independence celebrations in 1849 caused added problems for Cakobau. John Brown Williams, the first US government agent to Fiji, fired his cannon only to discover later that his dwelling was on fire and a number of indigenous Fijians had taken the opportunity to loot what he considered his precious belongings. Immediately after the incident, Williams attacked Cakobau for failing to institute law and order and claimed damages for the criminal conduct of indigenous Fijian men. The legal claim against Cakobau forced him to offer the possibility of cession to hegemonic powers such as Germany, United States and Great Britain, all of which declined. Germany did not have any strategic interest in the South Pacific apart from copra investments in Samoa, and the US was equally reluctant for similar reasons. Britain, however, pursued the policy of 'minimum intervention' and it was only cotton prospects, later brought to surface by the American Civil War, which became a strong argument in favour of British annexation of Fiji.²⁰⁸

The move to annex Fiji to Britain was supported by the Europeans on the island for cultural and ethnic reasons. For the Europeans, cession to Britain would be an opportunity to expand commerce and increase their cultural presence with the possibility of further European settlement or amalgamation with either New Zealand or Australia. The pressure for annexation and the favourable reviews by the British Consul to Fiji, William Thomas Pritchard, led the imperial government in London to commission a report on the feasibility of cession. In

²⁰⁸ John M. Ward, **British Policy in the South Pacific**, (Sydney: Australian Publishing Company, 1948), p. 159.

July 1860, Colonel Smythe came to Fiji and within ten months completed a report that rejected cession. European settlers, missionaries and traders desired the establishment of a legal authority similar to that in the settler colonies of Canada, New Zealand and Australia. By 1840, due to a strong growth of trade among New South Wales, New Zealand and Fiji, there emerged in Fiji an influential group of European traders at the port town of Levuka who lobbied overseas governments for a quick annexation of the islands. The number of Europeans in Fiji had grown significantly since 1803 and by 1866, there were more than 400 settlers with the number rising rapidly to 2,000 by 1870. As a result of pressure from the Europeans, Cakobau acceded to their demands and attempted initially to set up a government in Levuka consisting of Europeans and indigenous chiefs.

On 8 May 1865, the seven leading chiefs of Fiji-including those of Lakeba, Bau, Bua, Naduri, Rewa and Cakaudrove-signed an agreement at Levuka with an intention to form a government similar to the one advocated by the European settlers. This gesture of a written agreement between the Europeans and the chiefs was a beginning of the establishment of a Bauan-led historic-bloc. This historic-bloc, even though having the material capability to succeed, rested on a fragile political foundation, because the chiefly authority of eastern Fiji did not extend to interior of Viti Levu and other parts of Fiji, where indigenous Fijians refused to accept Christianity and waged war on Europeans over land claims. According to Sir Alan Burns:

In the rest of Fiji, the situation was not satisfactory, as Cakobau and his white advisors were less efficient and less capable of enforcing order. There were, however, more European residents and they were anxious to have a stable government under which they could work and trade in security.²⁰⁹

Seeing great-power interest in cession declining, Cakobau with his European allies established a constitutional government in 1871. Before the establishment of the Cakobau government, American claims were conveniently transferred to the Polynesia Company, which approached Cakobau with an offer to settle the debt, provided Cakobau granted the Company 200,000 acres of land, together with extensive privileges and powers.²¹⁰ Cakobau acknowledged that he had now been brought under the heels of the Europeans. Another issue was the traffic in illegal labour by unscrupulous planters who acquired labourers from the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu to work on cotton and sugar estates. The traffic in human labour caused political embarrassment to the British government which acknowledged that its citizens were involved in such a venture.

Law and order deteriorated further with the Europeans and the Fijian chiefs at loggerheads over the structure of the new government. Differences arose when indigenous chiefs sought a hierarchical government under the control of Cakobau whereas the Europeans were seeking responsible government with

²⁰⁹Sir Alan Burns, **Fiji**, (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1963), p. 84.

²¹⁰J.D.Legge, **Britain in Fiji 1858-1880**, (London: Macmillan and Company Ltd, 1958), p. 53.

limited franchise. Both the chiefs and the Europeans wanted to dominate the new political entity. The Europeans, especially, claimed that they be the ones represented at all levels of the government since they controlled trade. It took some six years before the Europeans and the indigenous Fijian chiefs led by Ratu Seru Cakobau agreed to finally set up a constitutional authority. A colonial government publication after cession reported that:

The Constitutional Act of August 1871 framed by the House of Delegates provided for the government of the whole group, and the establishment of a Constitution from and after 1 October, 1871. it also provided that the form of government should be Executive, Legislative and Judicial...²¹¹

The establishment of a Bauan-led historic-bloc, as noted earlier, rested on a rather fragile political platform. Apart from the refusal of the interior tribes of Viti Levu to recognise the new authority, competing factions within the government compromised political stability. Serious differences among political participants arose after Cakobau refused to accept the resignation of Ministers who had been defeated constitutionally by a large majority, thereby pre-empting a prolonged internal crisis, which resulted in the dissolution of the government in 1873. The problems with the Bauan-led historic-bloc established in 1871 were two fold. One was external as indigenous Fijian groups outside the Bauan sphere of influence refused to recognise the authority of the Bauan-led government, thereby raising the question of Cakobau's political legitimacy. The

²¹¹**The Colony of Fiji 1874-1931**, (Suva: Government Printer, 1931), p. 9.

other was internal in the sense that the Europeans who participated in the government did so to further their commercial and cultural interests, and when they realised that they would not benefit, they abandoned Cakobau.

The Bauan led historic-bloc was in crisis from the day it was established. In addition to the above, the Cakobau government failed to curb the illegal traffic in human labour, and this had damaged the reputation of the regime beyond repair. The British government, in particular, was concerned about the labour trade following reports that British citizens were involved. In 1872, the British government passed the Pacific Islanders Protection Act, but the Act did little to stop the illegal trade, although it did allow natives the chance to testify in judicial proceedings. In addition, the Act outlawed kidnapping and allowed only licensed ships to recruit labourers. Cakobau knew by 1873 that the constitutional setup of 1871 had in principle all but collapsed, and it was now time to solicit by all means the support of Britain for a quick annexation.

In the British House of Commons on 13 June 1873, a resolution was moved that the United Kingdom should either annex or declare a protectorate over the islands which would provide proper government and stop the bringing of kidnapped labourers to the territory. Finally after a lengthy debate, the British government approved plans for Fiji to become a Crown Colony. There was a general satisfaction with the government's decision as Mac Arthur, a member of the House of Commons, expressed gratification that the government had "yielded to the unanimous request of the chiefs, native people, and the white

residents of Fiji so far as to direct Sir Hercules Robinson to proceed to those islands with the view of that object."²¹² Before the annexation, a commission of inquiry was appointed with E.L. Layard, the new British Consul to Fiji and Commodore Goodenough, a senior naval officer of the Australian station. The Commission report concluded that cession should be accepted without any conditions from the indigenous chiefs. The Governor of New South Wales, Sir Hercules Robinson, arrived in Fiji on 23 September 1874 to discuss a number of issues with the chiefs, who at first expressed concern over the authority of the Crown on indigenous land, but as instructed, Robinson made it clear that there would only be an unconditional cession.

Colonial Fiji

The British Indirect Rule

The cession day was 10 October, 1874, and on that day there was a huge diplomatic gathering at Levuka. Sir Hercules Robinson, Commodore Goodenough, British Consul to Fiji E.L. Layard, the Attorney General of the New South Wales G.L. Innis together with high chiefs Ma'afu, Tui Cakau Ratu Epele, Tui Bua Ratu Savenaca and Bauan chief Ratu Seru Cakobau came together in the spirit of goodwill to complete the much anticipated British annexation. The British annexation of Fiji via a Deed of Cession was conceptualised by the indigenous chiefs as transferring the sovereignty of the

²¹²R.A. Derrick, **A History of Fiji Volume One**, p.247.

islands to Her Majesty with a tacit understanding that indigenous Fijian interests would be both protected and promoted. Following cession, Governors Sir Arthur Gordon and Sir John Bates Thurston continued to cement a protective policy towards the indigenous Fijians by incorporating the cultural hegemony of the chiefs in a new Council of Chiefs.

The colonial historic bloc was established in principle by the Deed of Cession and thereafter consolidated by the establishment of a Fijian administration system in harmony with the British colonial administration. It was envisaged by its designers to be the basis for the development of indigenous Fijians within their customary mode. The British also conceived the Fijian administration as a means to effectively establishing indirect rule. The most distinct feature of the Fijian administration was that it was guided by the customary authority of the indigenous Fijian chiefs, in particular eastern chiefs who had established a working relationship with the Europeans in 1871 with the formation of a short-lived Cakobau government. Following cession, Sir Hercules Robinson undertook the task of formulating and implementing a Fijian administrative system that did not undermine the cultural hegemony of the chiefs in Fiji. The role of the colonial administrators was to create some form of cultural continuity by establishing a singular indigenous administrative structure, modelled exclusively along the cultural experience of Bau.

At the apex of this administration was the Council of Chiefs. As early as 1886, changes to the indigenous Fijian custom were noted by Governor Sir John

Bates Thurston.

The Government of Fiji recognises that a change in the customary laws and obligations of the Fijian must come about, and in fact, is coming; but adopting the maxim 'salus populi suprema lex'; it deems it an imperative duty to ensure that this change is evolutionary and not revolutionary.²¹³

The stage had, at first, been set by Sir Arthur Gordon and his model of developing indigenous Fijians within their own customary fold. Since cession, it became important for Governor Sir Arthur Gordon to follow the dictates of indigenous custom and initiate a Native Council or the Council of Chiefs modelled along the experience of the Bauan-led historic bloc.

Accordingly, Sir Hercules Robinson in his despatch to the Colonial Secretary Office dated 16 October 1874 described the new native administration as a temporary provision for the administration of native affairs, dividing the islands into Provinces and Districts under Rokos and Bulis, a measure which he remarked as securing efficient government without departing in any important particular from their own official customs, traditions and boundaries. The system devised by Sir Hercules Robinson was continued by his immediate successor Sir Arthur Gordon on his arrival in June 1875, and which he continued and consolidated, leaving the Rokos in charge of the coastal

²¹³CSO Despatch No. 45 of 15 April 1886.

provinces, and placing under the European Commissioner the interior Hill districts.

The Fijian Administration

The Fijian administration comprised of four inter-connected administrative units. At the village level, there was an administrative officer in the person of Turaga-ni-Koro overseeing law and order in the village. Following the village was the Tikina or the district with its own administrative officer in the person of a Buli. The Buli had to inform his superiors of economic and law and order issues for a number of villages within the jurisdiction and pass on to the Turaga-ni-Koro of any policy directives from above. Above the Tikina were the Provincial Councils headed by the Rokos, who had wide ranging administrative powers and were responsible for forwarding progress reports to the Council of Chiefs, which was the official custodian of Fijian culture, tradition and interest.

Academics have interpreted this administrative system in a number of different ways. Fijian academic Professor Asesela Ravuvu labels the administration as a "government within a government with land and people demarcated and grouped according to traditional political and social alignments."²¹⁴ Ralph Premdas called the Fijian administration a "state within a state, designed to preserve to some extent the traditional Fijian political structure."²¹⁵ It is,

²¹⁴Asesela Ravuvu, **Vaka i Taukei: The Fijian Way of Life**, (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1983), p. 112.

²¹⁵Ralph R. Premdas, "Constitutional Challenge: The Rise of Fijian

however, important at this point to note that not all administrative officers serving in the Fijian administration were from indigenous chiefly heritage. European administrative officers were increasingly recruited to serve as Rokos, and by 1923 the system was reduced to one of direct rule through the District Commissioners.

Changes within the Fijian administration did not undermine the customary authority of the indigenous Fijian chiefs, and by 1944, "Fijian affairs were re-organised and the new Fijian administration came into being. It was, nevertheless, considerably threatened not only by the appointment of an able Fijian chief as Secretary for Fijian affairs, but also by the re-organisation of the units of local administration."²¹⁶ Under the revised system, the Provincial and District Councils were given wider powers, and new standards were insisted upon through Fijian magistracy and constabulary. In addition, it was acknowledged by the colonial authorities that the development of indigenous Fijians would be in accordance with Fijian custom and tradition under the guidance of indigenous chiefs. The change in the native administration came about only after Fijian members were appointed to the Legislative Council from 1904. By 1937, there were in the Legislative Council, five indigenous Fijian members, all of whom were appointed by the Governor on the advice of the Council of Chiefs. One such appointee was the Bauan chief, Ratu Sir Lala

Nationalism," **Pacific Perspective**, Vol. 9, No.2, 1980, p. 32.

²¹⁶R.R. Nayacakalau, **The Relation of Traditional and Modern Types of Leadership Problems of Economic Development among the Indigenous Fijians**, UNESCO, Working Group on Social Prerequisite to Economic Growth, Kyrenia, Cyprus, 17-26 April, 1963, p. 6.

Sukuna, who assisted Sir Philip Mitchell in his report on Fijian local government system, which resulted in the enactment of the Fijian Affairs Ordinance on 1 January 1945.

Ratu Sukuna, apart from being from the Bauan chiefly family, served in the French Foreign Legion during World War 1, and after his return from the front became the official voice on indigenous Fijian affairs. Being a close ally of the colonial government and being the first Fijian to earn a degree from Oxford, Sukuna was instrumental in facilitating the establishment of the Native Land Trust Board (NLTB) in 1940. The Board was to serve as a paternalistic entity to safeguard indigenous Fijian land interest which by then was under threat from the Europeans and Indo-Fijians. The Native Land Trust was set up for the protection of the indigenous Fijian land owners by preserving sufficient land for their use. The President of the Board was the Governor. There were three other ex-officio members, the Secretary for Fijian Affairs, the Director of Agriculture, the Director of Lands; and seven other members appointed by the Governor of whom not less than five were indigenous Fijians selected from the panel of seven presented by the Great Council of Chiefs.

The restructuring of Fijian administration by Ratu Sukuna was questioned by academic John Nation, who asserted that what Ratu Sukuna had instituted was a "neo-feudalistic structure based on an unreal idealisation of Fijian society and Fijian past."²¹⁷ Defence of Ratu Sukuna's interpretation of indigenous Fijian

²¹⁷John Nation, **Customs of respect: the traditional basis of Fijian**

aspiration comes from Rusiate Nayacakalou, who acknowledged that there were contradictions in the Fijian administration, emanating from the apparent confusion between administrative authority and traditional and customary authority. The example used by Nayacakalou was Turaga-ni-Koro and the village chief. The Turaga-ni-Koro was an administrative agent without traditional authority, while the village chief had traditional customary authority but no administrative recognition. Such contradictions were also present at the Provincial level where a European Roko did not command the same traditional respect as that of a Roko of chiefly ancestry or background. The seed of confusion was unconsciously planted into the credulous minds of the indigenous Fijians, and to clear such confusion, Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna proceeded to create a system that was based on the cultural hegemony of Bau.

The Great Council of Chiefs

The evolution of the Great Council of Chiefs as an institution has its origin in pre-cession Fiji. Chiefs in particular from eastern Fiji, during the political hegemony of Cakobau, deliberated on a number of issues including order, finance, government and relations with Europeans. Both through war and alliances, the chiefs in eastern Fiji imposed their authority throughout the islands and controlled vast resource rich areas. The chiefs from powerful yavusa regularly convened after Cakobau had consolidated his authority and acquiesced to the saving grace of the new god.

communal politics, (Canberra: The Australian National University, 1978), Development Studies Centre Monograph No. 14, p. 45.

In Fiji east, native councils were routinely convened by Bau before cession to collectively address indigenous issues. In the indigenous Fijian society, chiefs, priests, warriors, commoners, emissaries of the chief (mata-ni-vanua or the eye of the chief) and commoners had their own place within a hierarchical system. Chiefs had, in fact, a special role due to their customary position and roles. To be a chief was a birth right and this position was not transferable through any act or deed. Chiefly titles were also extended to individuals connected with the chiefly clan. In terms of political power, however, the child whose parents are both of chiefly rank has a far greater status than those who are not.

Indigenous Fijian history has dictated that custodians of vanua are the direct descendants of warrior chiefs, who through their fighting spirit established political kingdoms or matanitus. Chiefly succession is based on patrilineal descent lines and this trait is very clear in eastern part of Fiji. In the western Fiji, however, chiefly titles usually do not pass from the strict patrilineal descent mode and in most cases pass from brothers, sisters, uncles, to even a powerful member of the mataqali who has support of other mataqalis or chiefs. The influence and support from mataqali clans are important for chiefly succession, thus chiefly titles depend entirely on the support from the vanua or the people.

Due to social and political configuration in eastern Fiji, there emerged a number of powerful chiefs such as Ratu Seru Cakobau in Bau and Ma'afu in Lau. The chiefs of Cakaudrove, Bua, Ba, Namosi, Rewa, Tailevu, Ra, Yasawas and Nadroga also had their respective sphere of influence but not to the scale of

that of the Bauan kingdom. All chiefs accepted the political leadership of Bauan vunilvalu, Ratu Seru Cakobau. After the Deed of Cession was signed, an annual session of the Chiefs' Council began from September 1875. Supported by the then Governor to the Colony of Fiji, Sir Arthur Gordon, the Council of Chiefs were empowered to deliberate on indigenous Fijian cultural and social affairs and suggest to the colonial administration the ways in which the need to preserve Fijian communal order and the demands of the colonial regime, could best be accommodated. The Great Council of Chiefs reinforced the indigenous cultural orthodoxy of the past and acted as a powerful indigenous lobby. As mentioned at the beginning of the Chapter, the interests of the indigenous Fijian chiefs and the Europeans were often diametrically opposed.

The first issue to come before the Council of Chiefs or the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC) was native taxation, which imposed a financial obligation on each adult Fijian. The colonial government needed a tax base to sustain itself and the regime submitted the taxation issue to the Council of Chiefs. The tax debate came head on 23 September 1875 Council of Chiefs meeting. Connected closely with the tax debate was the customary practice of lala. According to this practice, the produce of the people first went to the chiefs who were believed to be linked to Kalou (god) and thus were empowered to bless the produce offered, creating hope and confidence for a better and more abundant produce next time. During the debate, it was acknowledged by the chiefs that the imposition of a new tax on the indigenous Fijians, in addition to the customary practice of lala, may bring about resentment. Therefore, after a

general discussion, it was agreed that a system similar to the practice of lala be devised so that there was minimum disruption to the indigenous Fijian way of life.

The chiefs forwarded a "culture-system", in-kind payment system, from which people's taxes could be paid. The Council was strongly in favour of the culture system as a means of indirect taxation through the extension of lala as opposed to that of imposing taxes in money.²¹⁸ The tax-in-kind system later became law, but the whole thrust of the tax debate tested the assurances of the colonial government that it would preserve Fijian tradition and custom. On 1 November 1886, the Native Lands Ordinance on native taxation was passed. This law levied communal tax-in-kind payable by the community to the colonial government. In addition, there was in the Ordinance a provision for compulsory labour that existed in terms of house building and road making.²¹⁹

However, a more pressing problem was in the area of land alienation. Land to the indigenous Fijians holds deep spiritual and cultural significance and the chiefs had before and at cession emphasised to the colonial government that alienating land from the indigenous population would not be accepted. Land in Fiji is communally owned by the land-owning unit called mataqali. Usually

²¹⁸Notes on the Proceedings of a Native Council, September 1875.

²¹⁹Native Lands Ordinance, 1 November 1886. There were a number of amendments to the Native Lands Ordinance. See Native Lands Ordinance XXI of 1892; Native Lands Ordinance II of 1893; Native Lands Ordinance VII of 1893; Native Lands Ordinance VII of 1896; and Native Lands Ordinance VIII of 1898.

under the mataqali system, senior members of the landowning unit would exert greater influence over land issues than younger ones. European contact and the influx of European settlers put pressure on indigenous Fijian land, and in many instances this pressure led Europeans to expropriate native land without compensation to landowners. Pressure from European planters later on to open up fertile land led the Council of Chiefs on 3 January 1878 to recommend the registration of all land and landowners. It was during the deliberations at the Council of Chiefs meeting "the often unscrupulous dealings of white men were highlighted."²²⁰

In December 1876, the misdeeds of the Europeans were taken up with the colonial authorities by Ratu Seru Cakobau and Ma'afu. In a letter addressed to Her Majesty, the chiefs stated:

In those times we did not understand the meaning of land selling. Since then some white men have bought our lands and we received payments for it, but they have afterwards secretly extended their boundaries. And some of our people, the owners of the land, are in the most pitiable condition, through the white men's deeds and habits.²²¹

As a response to the abusive practices of the Europeans, the Council of Chiefs on 3 January 1878 resolved to register lands and landowners. The record showed the position held by the owners in reference to the mataqali and

²²⁰Notes on the Proceedings of a Native Council, 5 December 1876.

²²¹Notes on the Proceedings of a Native Council, 13 December 1876.

veiqali, and also the order of precedence of vakamataqali in every Province.²²²

The Council of Chiefs was very concerned about indigenous Fijian land and its alienation. It was established that indigenous Fijian identity was inextricably linked to their land as the Council recommended the establishment of a Native Lands Commission to record indigenous Fijian land boundaries, according to existing land holdings.

The fears and concerns of the Council struck a responsive note in the colonial administration. Governor Sir Arthur Gordon, who claimed to be the ultimate authority on natives within the colonial administration, greatly sympathised with the concerns of the chiefs. In fact, Gordon's conceptualisation of Indigenous Fijian land and custom was largely due to his close relationship with the Council and the chiefs. It was established as an "official" view that the lands of the native indigenous Fijians were for the most part held by mataqalis or family communities as the proprietary unit, according to ancient customs.

Realising that native land had customary significance far exceeding the private property ideas of the Europeans, Governor Gordon became the principal force behind the Native Land Ordinance of 30 October 1880. This Ordinance brought indigenous Fijian land under the protective umbrella of British Crown as all native lands became inalienable from the native owners to any person not a native person except through the Crown. In addition to the Native Land Ordinance, indigenous Fijian land that was unfairly sold to the Europeans was

²²²Notes on the Proceedings of a Native Council, 3 January 1878.

repatriated to the original mataqalis. Such a move on the part of the colonial government further cemented the bonds of cooperation between the Council of Chiefs and the colonial administration. In a reply to a letter from Her Majesty, the chiefs expressed "satisfaction on the swift action of the colonial administration to restore lands that were unfairly sold to the Europeans."²²³

Despite receiving a sympathetic response to the request of repatriation of native land, there was a bigger question of indigenous Fijian land boundaries which had to a large extent become preoccupation of some chiefs, who knew that due to European impact and the subsequent introduction of the notion of private property, many mataqali units and its members could not clearly identify land boundaries. Nayacakalou²²⁴ noted in his seminal work that indigenous Fijians had a hard time identifying the land-owning group. The Council of Chiefs after much debate resolved in 1890 to initiate a Native Lands Commission with the objective to register and determine all indigenous Fijian land. The Council resolution was approved by the Governor but was amended in 1892 to include a number of suggestions from the Council of Chiefs. Under the 1892 amendments, native lands were to be leased for a term not exceeding 21 years and lands so leased were at a rate of 10 pounds per 100 acres for grazing purposes and 2/- to 20/- for agricultural purposes.

The Council of Chiefs was pleased by the colonial administration and the

²²³Notes on the Proceedings of a Native Council, 30 November 1881.

²²⁴Rusiate Nayacakalou, **Leadership in Fiji**, (Melbourne:Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 12.

measures were duly instituted to protect indigenous Fijian land. The chiefs also supported the Fijian administration. The Council stated in 1884: "we are pleased to see that the Government under which we chiefs and some Europeans hold appointment (Fijian administration) is so well adapted to our people."²²⁵ While the chief-British Colonial government relationship had been firmly entrenched as a historic-bloc, there was, however, an outstanding issue of Indian indenture labourers and, in particular, that of time-expired Indo-Fijians. The Council of Chiefs was concerned about the new racial group, who were introduced in the Colony of Fiji in 1874 and continued to come on "coolie" ships thereafter. The Indian labourers were different from the Europeans and all, according to the chiefs, were heathens with their own languages and cultural practices. Indo-Fijians were seen as showing disrespect to indigenous Fijian customary rules by bringing into Fijian villages undesirable and sometimes unwanted influence.

The Council of Chiefs noted in 1881 that:

We notice that many of those (Indo-Fijians) who have served their term of indenture locate themselves amongst us; and though we do not wish to be inhospitable, yet we cannot help observing that their numbers are increasing, and that they are becoming a source of annoyance to us by their thieving propensities and by their customs, which are entirely

²²⁵Notes on the Proceedings of a Native Council, 16 May 1884. The Council of Chiefs also praised the efforts of the colonial government in Resolution 4 of 30 November, 1881.

different from ours and distasteful to us.²²⁶

The Council of Chiefs fear of dwindling Fijian population was shared by Governor Sir Arthur Gordon, despite the fact that he was one of the principal architects of the Indian indenture labour scheme in Fiji.

In 1875, an estimated 40,000 Indigenous Fijians were wiped out due to the outbreak of the measles epidemic. A census taken on 10 March, 1879 showed that there were 108,924 indigenous Fijians compared to 140,500 in 1874.²²⁷ The population-argument, started by the Council of Chiefs, would remain a powerful one and would be used both by the Council and the colonial government to raise concerns about the growing population of Indo-Fijians, who would always be seen as 'alien' troublemakers as opposed to the peaceful European settlers. In the neo-Gramscian sense, the ideological basis for the chief-British colonial government historic-bloc was provided at first by the Deed of Cession and second by the first Governor to the Colony of Fiji, Sir Arthur Gordon, who consolidated the Fijian administration and provided an "official" legitimacy to the Council of Chiefs. The chief-Gordon interpretation of the Deed of Cession became the "official orthodoxy" upon which the discourse of chiefs and the colonial government was premised.

It was envisaged from the outset by the chiefs that they had not given up the

²²⁶Notes on the Proceedings of a Native Council, 11 May 1881.

²²⁷Census estimates March 1874 and March 1879.

sovereignty of the islands to the Crown but had given in trust to Her Majesty the administration of the Colony of Fiji. Timothy J. Macnaught put the Fijian interpretation of the Deed in perspective by emphasising that "in the Fijian popular mind the land had been given by the chiefs to the Queen Vakaturaga, that is, by way of chiefly representation which entitled them to expect that the Queen in her reciprocal generosity would return the lands to be shared and used by the people."²²⁸ This interpretation of the historic Deed of Cession persisted until the administration of Governor Sir John Bates Thurston (1888-1897). Thereafter, under the Governorship of O'Brien (1897-1902), the Gordon-chief interpretation of the Deed came under extensive scrutiny. It was interpreted by Governor O'Brien that the Deed had been legally misrepresented and as such became a problem for the Crown, particularly with respect to the alienation of native land.

Divisions within the Colonial Historic Bloc

In a correspondence dated 12 February 1897 to the Officer-in-Charge of administration in the Colony of Fiji, the Colonial Secretary advised that the Governor of Fiji, Sir John Bates Thurston passed away while on his voyage from Sydney to Melbourne.²²⁹ The Council of Chiefs noted with sadness the sudden passing away of Governor Thurston, who was a prominent advocate of the protection of the natives from the destructive influences of European

²²⁸Timothy J. Macnaught, **The Fijian Colonial Experience**, (Canberra: The Australian National University, 1982), p.30.

²²⁹CSO 65/97.

colonialism. It was, however, the wish of Governor Thurston to be buried in Fiji and the Legislative Council of the Colony voted to pay an allowance of 250 pounds on account of the children of the late Governor.

The Secretary of State Joseph Chamberlain advised the administration in Fiji that a new Governor had been appointed in the person of Governor George O'Brien²³⁰, who landed on the Colony on 10 July 1897. One of the first issues to be handled by Governor O'Brien was Fijian Labour Ordinance of 1895. Governor O' Brien in his correspondence to the Secretary of State advised the government that the Ordinance shall not be disallowed, as requested by his late predecessor Governor Thurston, who argued that Section 11 of the Fijian Labour Ordinance allowed contracts by service to be entered into by natives before any Magistrate, and that such a system encouraged abuse and irregularities. Governor O' Brien conducted his own enquiry into the allegations of the late Governor Sir John Bates Thurston and clarified that "there were only four cases of irregularity and that only one of these could be characterised as being of any gravity."²³¹

From the very beginning, Governor O'Brien had started to challenge some of the fundamental policies of his predecessors. Governor O' Brien advised that if the Colony of Fiji was to embark on any meaningful development, then the colonial government needed to bring in more Indian immigrants from India.²³² In

²³⁰Despatches to the Secretary of State, CSO 71/97.

²³¹Despatches to the Secretary of State CSO 33/97.

²³²Despatches to Secretary of State CSO 4/98.

fact, Governor O'Brien noted with much frustration that in Fiji, the Government owned no land, and that practically all the soil in the country was by the Act of Cession deemed to be owned by the natives. Under such a situation, all the government could do was, when land was required, to try to induce the native land-owners to lease it.

The Act of Cession, according to Governor O' Brien, had caused the Colony of Fiji to stagnate and he argued that economic development in the country could only be achieved by development of the sugar industry with the support of Indian indenture labourers. By 1898²³³, less than a year after Governor O' Brien's arrival, the issue of time-expired Indian indenture labourers and the settlement of Indian coolies dominated debates in the Legislative Council. Responding to the Despatch No. 57 of 13 November 1896 from the colonial secretary, Governor O'Brien advocated settlement of Indian coolies, because they were "hard working and honest men."²³⁴ By 1896, there were in the Colony of Fiji some 10,476 Indian immigrants out of which some 4,000 were not serving under indenture. Governor O' Brien noted that the "biggest problem was that the industrious coolies were not able to obtain land."²³⁵

Concerned about the settlement of time-expired Indian indenture workers and further troubled by the interpretation of the Deed by his predecessors, Governor O' Brien challenged the legal basis of the 1892 land ordinance. In

²³³Despatches to the Secretary of State CSO 57/98; also see CSO 2207/97.

²³⁴CSO 57/98.

²³⁵Ibid.

reinterpreting Section 4 of the Deed of Cession, Governor O' Brien stated that: "native ownership should be limited by proof of actual use or occupation, or real prospective requirement for the support and maintenance of claimants and not otherwise."²³⁶ Governor O'Brien noted that under the chief-Gordon viewpoint, indigenous Fijian claim of any use or occupation of land, however remote, was sufficient to vest ownership in the claimant. For the Governor, this misrepresentation of the Deed of Cession was tantamount to fraud, and the Gordon-Thurston view needed an urgent revision for the sake of the Colony's economic and political future. In addition, Governor O' Brien mounted a frontal attack on the Native Lands Commission for being a drain on the resources of the government and for not acting in the best economic interest of the Colony. Governor O' Brien's views were noted with displeasure in the Council of Chiefs meetings. Despite reinterpreting Section 4 of the Deed of Cession, Governor O' Brien cautioned that since natives had been living comfortably under the chief-Gordon system, any attempt to change would be viewed as interference. To resolve an otherwise a volatile situation, O' Brien envisaged that natives could voluntarily sell or lease land on easier terms to the Government than to the Indo-Fijians, and as such the Government of the Colony of Fiji could provide funds to purchase or lease native lands.

Thurston had during the tenure of his office warned that attempts to alienate indigenous Fijian land would result in a bloody war throughout the colony. These words, however, were taken heed of by the new Governor while

²³⁶Ibid.

accepting the imperative that land be freed or be made readily available to coloured labourers, who were seen as the driving force behind sugar cultivation.

The European settler community in Fiji found restrictions on the alienation of indigenous land an impediment to their commercial interest and as a result made presentations to New Zealand in anticipation of forming a majority European bloc. As a result, the Premier of New Zealand proposed to the Secretary of State for the Colonies that Fiji become part of New Zealand federation. In reply to this request, Governor O' Brien argued that such a federation would not be of benefit to the indigenous Fijians. According to O' Brien:

Climatic conditions preclude the idea of Fiji being a white man's country in the sense of white men being able to make it a permanent home for themselves and their descendants, or develop its resources by means of white labour.²³⁷

In the Census of 1891, it was noted that there were 105,800 indigenous Fijians; 7,468 Indo-Fijians and 2,036 Europeans in the Colony of Fiji. Under such a population scenario, the Europeans desired to be a bigger population and this could only be achieved if Fiji formed a federation with its immediate white neighbours either Australia or New Zealand. Even though a number of European residents endorsed federation with New Zealand in a Fiji-wide

²³⁷Despatches to the Secretary of State CSO 71/1900.

petition, their request was denied.

Governor O' Brien was interested in understanding the dynamics behind indigenous Fijian socio economic development and as a result a research was conducted under the auspicious of Assistant Governor William Allardyce and enclosed in a memorandum for His Excellency Governor O' Brien dated 20 February 1901.

William Allardyce observed that:

Indigenous Fijians as a whole are loyal, communal, conservative, law abiding, good natured people, thriftless with no thought for the morrow; indiscipline to anything like hard work where it is possible to be avoided, ceremonious, impressionable, fickle, and with little or no firmness of character of forethought. The average native is not easily roused by anger, but there are three points upon which if interfered with he is prepared to show his teeth. They are (a) his land; (b) his women; and (C) his taxes.²³⁸

It was concluded that indigenous Fijians were at heart a savage with antiquated or obsolete custom which undoubtedly was an impediment to progress. However, attempts to reform the Fijian system and reinterpret the Deed of Cession met insurmountable hardship in the Colonial Secretary's Office in Britain where at the request of the Council of Chiefs, Sir Arthur Hamilton

²³⁸Despatches to the Secretary of State CSO 20/91; also see CSO 49/91.

Gordon, now a lord and a senior officer in the imperial government, persuaded the Colonial Secretary not to grant any request from the resident Governor that would undermine indigenous Fijian interests.

On 17 May 1901, the Assistant Governor, William Allardyce, once again confronted the issue of alienating native land for re-settling time-expired Indians. Allardyce noted that "the land owned by natives is largely in excess of their requirements, but the problem encountered by the colonial Government was that of Native Lands Ordinance of 1892 which made acquisition of land for Crown use virtually impossible."²³⁹ The Attorney-General of the Colony, Mr. Pollak, informed Mr. Allardyce that land cannot be legally acquired under Section 18 of the Native Lands Ordinance for the purpose of settling Indian coolies. The legal interpretation of the Attorney-General was challenged by the Assistant Governor who invoked clause 4 of the Deed of Cession. This clause reserved to the Crown the right to take any land which may be necessary for any purpose, subject only to the payment of compensation to the native landowners.

William Allardyce recommended that Section 18 of the Native Lands Ordinance be amended and further went on to clarify that clause 4 of the Deed of Cession had been wrongly interpreted. In a letter dated 24 September 1901 to King Edward VII, the chiefs stated that they were largely pleased with the administration of Governor O' Brien and that they wished his Deputy William

²³⁹Despatches to the Secretary of State, CSO 129/1901.

Allardyce to be his successor.²⁴⁰ In fact, the chiefs were relieved to see Governor O' Brien go. He had during his term challenged the chief-Gordon viewpoint on land and suggested reinterpreting the Deed of Cession, thereby causing fear among the chiefs of possible "unlawful" acquisition of native land by the Crown.

But the fear was imaginary as it turned out the Council of Chiefs had written to the imperial government and frustrated the plans of Governor O' Brien. While this temporarily set aside the threat to the colonial historic-bloc, it did, however, introduce a new mode of thinking within the colonial administration. As it turned out, Governor O' Brien's successor Sir Henry Jackson continued with the criticism of the Fijian system much to the disappointment of the indigenous Fijian chiefs. Governor Jackson arrived in the Colony on 10 September 1902 and noted that the "Fijian administration was government through the chiefs and for the chiefs."²⁴¹ In a more radical approach to the Fijian administration, Governor Jackson commented that commoner indigenous Fijians suffered under the rigid autocratic control of the chiefs and in order to remedy such a situation, Governor Jackson recommended extending liberty to this group. The views of both Governor O' Brien and Governor Jackson suffered a great set back with the publishing of a report titled "Treatise on Land Tenure among the Natives in Fiji" by Dr. Lorimer Fison in 1903, which elucidated that "in ceding Fiji Islands to the British Crown, the chiefs most certainly understood that they

²⁴⁰Letter from the Native Council dated 24 September 1901, p.2.

²⁴¹Despatches to the Secretary of State CSO 38/1903.

were giving over the lands, as well as the sovereignty, of the group. But it is equally certain that they had not surrendered the land titles in their hands. In all righteousness, therefore, it is the management, not the ownership of the Fijian estate that has come into the possession of the Crown."²⁴²

The work of Dr. Fison to a large extent augmented the chief-Gordon viewpoint, thereby assisting in sustaining the existing colonial historic-bloc. However, it should be noted that the colonial historic-bloc faced a number of opposition from within the indigenous Fijian community, and these movements shall be conceptualised as sub-cultural resistance anti-hegemonic movements, since they attempted to formulate and consolidate alternative cultural blocs.

Conclusion

In Fiji, the rise of Bau as a hegemonic kingdom is important in understanding chiefly cultural hegemony during the colonial period as well as the political hegemony of the chiefs after independence from Britain in 1970. Bau, being, a coastal entity, was the first to restructure its social and cultural relations by adopting European technology and forming strategic alliances with neighbouring hegemonic power, Tonga.

The relationship between Tonga and Bau, which had already begun through trade in the pre-European period, had acquired a new meaning by the mid-

²⁴²Dr. Lorimer Fison, **Treatise on Land Tenure among the Natives in Fiji**, (Suva: Government Printer, 1903), pp. 27-28.

nineteenth century when Baun chief Cakobau relinquished pagan gods in favour of Christianity. By then, through warfare, Bau had already acquired political hegemony with the aid of its warrior chief, Ratu Seru Cakobau.

The Bauan-led historic bloc, consisting of chiefs and European settlers, was in crisis since its formation in 1871 due to cultural and ethnic divisions. Conflict within the bloc created political instability as Ratu Seru Cakobau looked towards Britain for assistance. After initial reluctance on the offer of cession, Britain agreed to an unconditional annexation and as a result, the chiefs ceded Fiji to Britain in 1874.

After Cession, Britain modelled indigenous administration in the Colony of Fiji along the social experience of Bau, and cemented the cultural hegemony of the chiefs through the Council of Chiefs. The colonial historic bloc, based on the colonial government, the Council of Chiefs and the European settlers, remained divided along cultural and ethnic lines as the Council of Chiefs moved to seek greater protection for indigenous land from benevolent colonial Governors, including Sir Arthur Gordon, who implemented a protective colonial policy towards indigenous Fijians to shield them from the destructive forces of colonial capitalism. However, successive Governors did not share Gordon's viewpoint, thereby increasing conflict and divisions within the historic bloc. The European settlers also saw the protective policy towards the indigenous population as contrary to the interests of capitalism and lobbied for annexation to New Zealand. However, the proposal for annexation was rejected but by then, the colonial government had introduced in 1879 a third racial group, the Indian

indentured labourers, to protect indigenous Fijians from capitalist exploitation and to provide cheap and flexible labour for European planters.

As a result, at the end of the nineteenth century, Fiji had three racial groups: Europeans, indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians and all three were caught in the complexities of colonial ethnic politics. Moreover, despite establishing an indigenous Fijian administration and the Council of Chiefs, within the indigenous Fijian community, various groups started to challenge chiefly hegemony and the colonial historic bloc. These challenges are discussed in the next Chapter as sub-cultural anti-hegemonic indigenous movements.

CHAPTER 4

INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE

The cultural hegemony of the chiefs was challenged by various indigenous sub-cultures. These sub-cultures were anti-colonial and anti-chief and as a result threatened the colonial historic bloc. The alliance between the colonial government and the indigenous chiefs was seen by mostly indigenous Fijian commoners as untraditional, disruptive and a product of contact with the outside world. As highlighted in Chapter 3, European contact, pressure to open up indigenous land, European backed Bauan hegemony, the introduction of a new religion, and after cession the establishment of Fijian administration and the Council of Chiefs all challenged the cultural perception of a number of indigenous Fijians, especially those in the interior of Viti Levu, who questioned the neo-traditional order and attacked the foundation of chiefly and colonial power in Fiji. Continuing on the theme on the role of culture and ethnicity shaping hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony, this Chapter argues that the Hill Tribes, the Tuka, the Luveniwai and the Bula Tale movements challenged the cultural hegemony of the chiefs and posed a threat to the colonial historic bloc, which was internally divided and prone to internal ethnic and cultural conflicts. In response, the chiefs and the colonial administration resorted to armed intervention to subdue rebellious anti-establishment movements, resulting in the increased militarisation of the colonial and later the chiefly political hegemony.

Resistance to the perceived threat to the traditional way of life originated in the interior of Viti Levu-a region before cession labelled as fiercely savage and unstable. The Hill Tribes, by which name this rebellious group was known by, rejected the authority of the Bauan chief Ratu Seru Cakobau, who accused the Hill people of undermining the Cakobau administration and of rampant pagan lawlessness.

The resistance of the Hill Tribes was directed at the cultural hegemony of the eastern chiefly establishment and its allies and this can be conceptualised within the dialectics of hegemony and anti-hegemony. The Europeans and the chiefs had codified their alliance with the Deed of Cession, but consolidating hegemony over all the groups on the island posed a political problem. In so far as the Hill tribes were concerned, the eastern indigenous chiefs had traded away their custom and tradition to the Europeans and further attempted to assert control by imposing institutional structures alien to indigenous Fijians of interior Fiji.

Anti-Hegemonic Movements

The Hill Tribes of Fiji

The Hill Tribes of Fiji were a distinct social group with an egalitarian social structure.²⁴³ They contrasted with their counterparts in eastern Fiji, where

²⁴³A.B. Brewster, **Genealogies and Histories of the Matanitu or Tribal**

Polynesian influence created a centralised and a more hierarchical system. For the Hill Tribes, the Cakobau government was installed purely to serve the interest of the Europeans. The early European settlers were aggressive and had no respect for the indigenous Fijian way of life, and with an increase in settler numbers and missionaries, the pressure to open up indigenous land grew with Cakobau sanctioning the often illegal activities of the Europeans in acquiring indigenous land. Fearing loss of land and culture, the chiefs of the Hill Tribes adopted measures to defend their territory from European and missionary encroachment. By then, however, under the orders of Cakobau, Europeans had already moved in to the Hill area and erected fences, prohibiting natives from entering their "private property."

To preserve the Hill way of life, the Hill warriors invaded the area occupied by white settlers and murdered a number of settlers. This defiant and violent episode which occurred in 1873 infuriated Cakobau, who after cession advised the colonial government to send an armed contingent to subdue the rebellious tribes.

In January 1875, Mr. Layard, the administrator of the colonial government, met a large number of representatives from the tribes of the interior of Viti Levu. At this meeting, the Hill Tribes spokespersons agreed to renounce heathenism and abandon cannibalism and recognise the hegemony of the colonial government.

Governments of Central Viti Levu, (London: Seeley, 1922).

Following the meeting, there was an outbreak of measles and this had a severe impact on the lives of the Hill Tribes as many who contracted the disease died, leading to speculation among tribal priests that the Europeans had cast a deadly spell to destroy their community. A memorandum from Sir Arthur Gordon noted that "the Kai Tholo chiefs carried the seeds of the disease with them to their homes and communicated it to their tribes, among whom it spread rapidly, and with fatal effect."²⁴⁴ With the Hill chiefs dead, the Hill warriors started to fortify their positions to prevent any further contact with the Europeans.

By January of 1876, Walter Carew assessed the situation in the Tholo province and recommended that a body of police take up position in the inland district. In fact, Carew's efforts were to protect the nominally Christian villages from the hostile Hill agitators. Walter Carew noted that the tribes in the interior of Viti Levu that resisted colonial government had never submitted to any coastal chief and were generally suspicious of the new political order. According to Carew, "under this order, Europeans had invaded the Tholo province and were unduly influencing the native population to abandon polygamy and adopt Christianity, English law and English magistrates."²⁴⁵

The fragile peace collapsed when on 12 April 1876 the village of Nawaqa was

²⁴⁴**Letters and Notes: The Disturbances in the Highlands of Viti Levu, Fiji 1876**, Volume 1, (Edinburgh: R and R Clark, 1879), p. vi.

²⁴⁵Ibid, p. ix.

burned and frontier towns of the province of Nadi were destroyed by the following day. In Sigatoka, Christian villages were burnt and a number of women and children killed by the united forces of the Hill Tribes. The news of the assault on Nadi and Sigatoka reached the Resident Commissioner, on 22 April 1876, who despatched reinforcements to the garrison at Nasaucoko. According to a preliminary assessment by the Commissioner and his agents in the province, the area affected by the uprising consisted of the province of Sigatoka, Nadi and its tributaries. At the beginning of May 1876, the actual position of the parties in the affected region was as follows: "1. The garrison of Nasaucoko consisted of 250 men, chiefly armed constabulary. 2. At Navailili, about ten miles from the mouth of Sigatoka, a camp had been formed, where Ratu Luki, Roko Tui Nadroga's force was stationed. This force already large was daily receiving accessions from Serua and Namosi and by the end of the month amounted to 1000 men. 3. The Na Nuyakoro were in arms against the government, but had taken no overt action."²⁴⁶

The colonial government feared that hostilities in the Tholo province could spread and affect the loyal towns. In particular, Governor Sir Arthur Gordon advised the Resident Commissioner to secure and capture and put on trial those who challenged Her Majesty's authority over the islands. In addition, Gordon called for the subjugation of rebellious villages and tribes which refused to obey government summons.

²⁴⁶Ibid, p. xiii.

To achieve the objective of the colonial government, Gordon made a call to all the able bodied men in the Colony to join the "force" of civilisation in subduing the "savages." A force of 2000 men was assembled under the command of Captain Knolly, who was given specific directions to march to Nadi, proceed to Ba river and by land descend upon Nadrau from where the forces were to start their assault on Sigatoka, the supposed stronghold of the rebels. Following Gordon's successes in Sigatoka, Captain Knolly's forces routed the rebels and those caught were tried under the colonial ordinance²⁴⁷ and subsequently sentenced to death.

Sir Arthur Gordon, in his despatch to the Colonial Secretary elaborated on the trial.

It is important to point out that the capital punishments thus inflicted were not, as they might at first sight appear to be, military executions. The accused were tried in the same manner as they would have been under ordinary circumstances, and by the same tribunal before which they would have been brought if no outbreak had taken place...²⁴⁸

By June 30 1876 the last of the non-combatant population in Tavua-i-Colo surrendered and the chiefs of Vaturavi were examined and interrogated after which they were put in bonds. After the trial, the rebellious chiefs were hanged and a permanent garrison was erected to ensure peace and stability in the

²⁴⁷ Ordinance No. 16 of 1875.

²⁴⁸ **The Disturbances in the Highlands**, p. xvii.

region. In his correspondence to the Earl of Carnarvon, Sir Arthur Gordon noted that "the subjugated tribes are rebuilding their towns by the riverside and the plains, but have been forbidden to reoccupy their dismantled strangleholds in the mountains. In addition, the tribes have accepted Christian teachers."²⁴⁹

Simione Durutalo noted that the Hill Tribes had made "a fundamental mistake by relying on their rocky fortress-and to fight from fixed positions where they could be easily surrounded and besieged until they ran out of food and ammunition."²⁵⁰ Despite this logistical error, the insurgency of the Hill Tribes had challenged and shaken the very foundation of the colonial historic bloc. The anti-hegemonic movement of the Hill Tribes was anti-chief and anti-European. In response, the colonial administration and the eastern chiefs sent an armed force to subdue the rebellion in the Hill region and in doing so established a precedence that was used throughout the colonial period to break other less rebellious anti-colonial movements.

After the subjugation of Hill Tribes, the anti-hegemonic movement took a new form with indigenous Fijian residents, in Tholo and adjoining provinces, slowly developing networks of alternative visions and ideas by using the knowledge provided by the rich oral tradition of the old religion. It became essential for those opposed to the colonial authority to reject Christian ideals and focus on

²⁴⁹Sir Arthur Gordon quoted in **Letters and Notes: The Disturbances in the Highlands of Viti Levu, 1876**, Volume II, (Edinburg: R and R Clark, 1879), p. 342.

²⁵⁰Simione Durutalo, "Internal Colonialism and Unequal Regional Development: The Case of Western Viti Levu, Fiji", MA Thesis, University of the South Pacific, 1985, p. 110.

the ancestor gods for spiritual guidance. The emergence of anti-colonial and anti-hegemonic sub-culture within the indigenous Fijian community alarmed not only the colonial government but also the Council of Chiefs.

The Luveniwai and Tuka Movements

A year after the subjugation of the Hill Tribes, unrest among indigenous Fijians was noted in the town of Ra. From 1880-1920, two important anti-hegemonic movements provide insight into the nature of indigenous resistance to the colonial culture.

First, there was the luveniwai or "water babies" movement which drew upon fairy tale spirits. "The spirits were elves, dwarfs and spirits which, according to ancient superstition, dwelled in dense forests and waterfalls."²⁵¹ The colonial government saw the followers of the luveniwai as a threat to Christianity and to the colonial historic bloc. As a result, the games and rather playful rituals associated with luveniwai were outlawed and those caught were arrested, imprisoned or banished. Martha Kaplan noted that "in 1887 the British colonial government of Fiji passed a regulation against 'luveniwai' which they believed to be the rituals that were rebellious, secretive and led by charlatans."²⁵²

Kaplan continues:

²⁵¹ Max Wohlwill (trans) Friedrich Steinbauer, **Melanesian Cargo Cults: New salvation Movements in the South Pacific**, (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1979), p. 95.

²⁵² Martha Kaplan, "Luve Ni Wai as the British Saw It: Constructions of Customs and Disorder in Colonial Fiji," **Ethnohistory**, Vol. 36, No.4, 1989, p.349.

[The colonial government] insisted that this judgment was made on the basis of knowledge of Fijian custom and that Fijians had always found these rituals to be objectionable. However, the rites and practices involving inspirations by deities and invulnerability that were known by these names [luveniwai and Kalou rere] were integral moments in the ritual system of nineteenth-century Fijian war culture.²⁵³

Brewster²⁵⁴ emphasised that the superstition called "luveniwai" that was latent in the Hill country had begun to spread. This was so because Christian churches virtually failed to change animistic beliefs of the past.²⁵⁵

The other movement within this period was the Tuka Movement. Martha Kaplan noted that "few Indigenous Fijians know the word 'Tuka' at all, yet the story of indigenous leader Navosavakadua and his 'working miracles' is widely known throughout the islands."²⁵⁶ According to Kaplan, "Navosavakadua's movement articulated Fijian war dances with European army marching, identified Fijian gods with Jesus and Jehovah, and used borrowed emblems of high chiefly status to distract this court."²⁵⁷ The activities of the Tuka followers challenged

²⁵³ Ibid, p. 350.

²⁵⁴ A.B. Brewster, **The Hill Tribes of Fiji**, (London: Seeley, Service & Co. Limited, 1922), p. 89.

²⁵⁵ A.C. Cato, "A new religious cult in Fiji," **Oceania**, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 1947, p. 147.

²⁵⁶ Martha Kaplan, "Land and Sea and the new White Men: A Reconsideration of the Fijian Tuka Movement," PhD Dissertation, The University of Chicago, 1988, p3; also see pp.31-33 of the above thesis for a brief on the Fijian origins of myths.

²⁵⁷ Martha Kaplan, "On Discourse and Power: 'Cults' and 'Orientals' in Fiji,"

the cultural hegemony of the chiefs who were concerned about the political danger of heathenism²⁵⁸ and the threats it posed to chiefly privilege within the colonial historic bloc. For the colonial government, it was concerned that Tuka activities could compromise the spread of Methodist faith in the region and lead to possible protests against alienation of indigenous land.

While Tuka has been referred to as "syncretic" and "messianic", the ideological and cultural impact of this movement extended beyond the confines of Ra, the Province where the first Tuka movement took shape. The Tuka movement first caught public attention in 1885, but by then the commoner leader of Tuka, Ndugumoi had acquired the reputation of a "prophet." Ndugumoi borrowed ideas from the colonial Fijian administration to drive home his message of cultural resistance. In fact, the leader took the title of indigenous Chief Justice, Navosavakandua: the person who speaks only once. By conferring upon him this title, Ndugumoi acquired an ideological legitimacy that irritated the chiefs and their colonial allies who quickly labelled Tuka as a destabilising presence in the Colony.

The word Tuka means immortality and that is what Ndugumoi promised his followers. According to Fijian oral tradition,²⁵⁹ the Tuka religion dates back from the time of the flood after which there were three survivors, all brothers who lived in the Nakauvadra mountains, which dominate the Rakiraki coast. Their

American Ethnologist, Vol. 26, No.4, 1999, p. 848.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 846.

²⁵⁹ Willam Sutherland, "The 'Tuka' Religion," **Transactions of the Fijian Society**, 12 February, 1910, p. 51.

names were Lutunasobosobo, Degei and Waicala; and their place of residence was held sacred and was taboo. The eldest of the three brothers was Lutunasobosobo and he was the first to die leaving Degei and Waicala. Later on Waicala married Princess Sovanatabua who had two sons, who were in Fijian popular culture deemed gods with tremendous spiritual power. But order broke down when the sons of Waicala picked up a quarrel with their uncle Degei over a bird that was given to Degei by his brother Waicala. Degei, being the most powerful god, waged war on his nephews after they killed the bird in dispute. Eventually, the two confessed to the wrongdoing and were asked to repent for their mistake. The brothers had to go on a mission to spread the word of the gods of Naukauvadra and convince inhabitants of the island to refrain from evil deeds. If those preached about the god's word refrained from evil misdeeds, they would obtain immortality (Tuka) by joining the supreme spirit after death. Oral tradition has it that the two brothers linked up with Ndugumoi in Taveuni and told him to follow the word of the god and by doing so achieved immortality. It is also believed that the two brothers gave Ndugumoi the new title: Navosavakandua.

The Tuka movement used ideas from the old custom and expertly amalgamated it with ideas expressed in the New Testament. Followers could not differentiate between the two and thought of the ideas as both prophetic and spiritually uplifting. Ndugumoi preached in villages around Ra and emphasised that the prevailing colonial social order was imposed against the wishes of the indigenous Fijian people. To rid the Fijian society of an imposed

order, the Tuka leader called for: a) the reversal of the world order so that the Europeans would serve the chiefs and the commoners; b) a reintroduction of the traditional form of social organisation; c) bringing back old religion and suppression of Christianity; and d) removing all Europeans and their technology from the islands. Ndugumoi's teaching quickly turned from being purely prophetic to political. "He made his doctrine specifically anti-white by repeatedly accusing the Europeans in the Colony of Fiji of deception and skulduggery."²⁶⁰ The influence of Ndugumoi was so great that the stories of his miracles spread quickly to other villages and this caused uneasiness among Christian church leaders, who called on the colonial regime to intervene to protect "Christianity." Brewster noted that the acts of Ndugumoi also influenced the Iuveniwa movement. From 1887 to 1890, the youth of Noemalu were reported to be engaging in "paganism" which was supported by the village Buli.²⁶¹

The leader of the Tuka movement, Ndugumoi was so successful in selling his anti-establishment, anti-chief and anti-Christian ideas that the colonial authorities moved against him with full force of the colonial law. Ndugumoi was charged with sedition and disrupting the peace. After a show-trial, Ndugumoi was sentenced to hard labour and banished for ten years to Rotuma. The colonial government also used force to subdue this mass anti-hegemonic movement in the Tholo Province because it feared that anti establishment ideas, in particular against collaborator chiefs, would spread and create political

²⁶⁰Peter Worsley, **The Trumpet Shall Sound**, (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1957), p. 22.

²⁶¹A.B.Brewster, **The Hill Tribes of Fiji**, p. 278.

and social instability. Suppressing the Tuka movement with force was the only option left for the government, because Ndugumoi skilfully managed to paralyse the colonial propaganda machinery through a perfect blend of ideas from the old and the new religion.

Ndugumoi further boosted his image by projecting an enigmatic and somewhat prophetic image. The Tuka followers believed that the colonial government tried to kill their leader, but each time he survived because he carried with him the spirit of the ancestor god. Even though Ndugumoi died in exile in Rotuma, his prophecies continue to reach Fiji from time to time. The exile of Ndugumoi and the mass arrest of Tuka followers had an adverse impact as many supporters went underground and silently continued practising the teachings of their prophet. In 1892, there was a mass revival led by Sailosi Ratu, who claimed to have been inspired by the spirit of Ndugumoi. "The colonial government quickly moved to arrest the spread of Tuka and razed Ndugumoi's village of Ndrau-ni-ivi to the ground, and deported its people to Kadavu islands."²⁶²

The sub-culture created by the Tuka followers continued to influence villagers in mostly western Viti Levu resulting in further challenges to the colonial historic bloc. One such challenge was led by Apolosi Nawai, who came into contact with the Tuka movement in the Fijian province of Ra.

²⁶²Peter Worsley, **The Trumpet Shall Sound**, p. 24.

The Nawai Movement

The anti-hegemonic Tuka forces were suppressed temporarily by the imposition of colonial laws and armed intervention, but the ideas expressed by Ndugumoi and Sailosi Ratu continued to be communicated to the younger generation. In the early twentieth century, the "undesirable" ideas began to surface once more, and another indigenous leader in the person of Apolosi Nawai²⁶³, who was educated at the colonial technical School, began to question colonial institutions and in particular the economic dominance of Europeans in commerce. Nawai's anti-hegemonic movement was of an entirely different character than that of Ndugumoi's. For Nawai, it was important that indigenous Fijians participate in commerce and break the European monopoly in trade, investment and business. Nawai was familiar with the teachings of the Tuka movement, and sought to use some of Ndugumoi's philosophies to bring indigenous Fijians into commerce.

In 1914, Nawai launched his Viti Kabani or Fijian Company, and encouraged indigenous Fijians to participate in the cash economy. By then, the British empire had already entered World War I against Germany and Austro-Hungary and the new movement was immediately seen as a plot to undermine the war effort and cause disruption to the economy of the Colony. For Nawai, the colonial system was designed to keep indigenous Fijians economically

²⁶³ See Chapter six of Timothy J. Macnaught, **The Fijian Colonial Experience: A Study of neo-traditional order under British Colonial Rule Prioie to World War II**, (Canberra: Australian National University, 1982).

dependent on Europeans and the chiefs. To rid the Colony from the arbitrary neo-traditional system, Nawai proposed: a) Fijian participation in commerce through the establishment of Fijian financial institutions; b) indigenous Fijians to assist each other by trading among themselves; c) acquiring boats and canoes to participate in the lucrative long-distant trade; and d) open defiance to European laws and collaborator chiefs.

Nawai was able to generate indigenous Fijian enthusiasm in business, but he himself fell victim to European laws by not registering his Viti Company. The European merchants, however, capitalised on the business enthusiasm ignited in the indigenous Fijians by Nawai and launched a European-led company with a similar name. Unlike Nawai's Viti Company, the Europeans lawfully registered their company and pressured the colonial authority to outlaw both Nawai's company and his activities. According to James Heartfield, "Nawai challenged the European board of directors who were plainly using his venture to enrich themselves"²⁶⁴ and in his fight against the Europeans, Nawai was supported by two Australian migrants Stella and Albert Spencer, "who persuaded Apolosi that he ought to try to win legal control of the company."²⁶⁵

By challenging the Europeans, Nawai had exposed to indigenous Fijians his anti-colonial and anti-chief position, and as such the chiefs and the colonial government agreed to a plan of action to break Nawai's movement. Ratu

²⁶⁴ James Heartfield, "'You are not a White Woman!': Apolosi Nawai, the Fiji Produce Agency and the Trial of Stella Spencer in Fiji," **The Journal of Pacific History**, Vol. 38, No. 1, 2003, p. 70.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

Sukuna, one of the leading indigenous chiefs, advised indigenous Fijians not to be influenced by Nawai's ideas which according him could effectively undermine Fijian traditional way of life.

The chiefs, and in particular the Council of Chiefs, were of the opinion that indigenous Fijians were not ready to participate in the cash economy and if they were persuaded to do so could spell disaster for the Fijian way of life. The Council of Chiefs had asserted that the Council was the sole cultural authority on indigenous Fijians and that Nawai was a charlatan. Nevertheless, Nawai insisted that the chiefs of Fiji had “distorted” indigenous culture to protect their privilege within the colonial system and as such he recommended a re-ordered the indigenous society where the chiefs served the commoners.

Besides the need to preserve indigenous Fijian tradition, there were other ethnic factors at play. Europeans had a total monopoly on trade and business activities, therefore, they as a group greatly resisted Nawai's intrusion. Nawai in his attempt to improve the financial condition of his company engaged in a massive fund raising drive, but none of the monies received were properly accounted for. At the Council of Chiefs meeting in May 1914, Council members passed a resolution asking the Governor to prohibit the collection of money for the Viti Company²⁶⁶ and investigate the financial affairs of Nawai. Following an investigation, the colonial government charged Nawai with embezzlement and fraud and after a short trial, he was incarcerated. While in prison, Nawai

²⁶⁶ The Council of Chiefs minutes 20 May 1914.

became even more popular and among his followers and acquired the cultural status of a chief much to the concern of the Council of Chiefs. Once out of prison, Nawai was presented with a large whale's tooth (tabua) by his followers, a recognition normally given to a high chief during customary indigenous ceremony. After being elevated to the status of a chief, Nawai went on a highly publicised lecture tour, which was labelled seditious by the colonial authorities as well as the chiefs. Nawai was charged with sedition and, like his predecessor Ndugumoi, exiled to Rotuma. Supporters of Nawai believe that after completing his exile, Nawai, on his way back to Fiji, died on the island of Yacata in 1946. The Nawai movement was subsequently outlawed by the colonial government and all public gatherings of the members of the Viti Company were banned.

Those who believed in Nawai waited for the prophet's return. In fact, Nawai was said to have predicted the financial collapse of the European world and another great war. His visions and ideas challenged the foundations of the colonial government and the cultural hegemony of the chiefs. Like Ndugumoi, Nawai's message was anti-European and anti-chief. The frontal attack on the colonial government, the chiefs and the privileged Europeans was nationalist in character, since Nawai sought to change the current order so that Europeans would serve the indigenous Fijians and the chiefs' commoners. The anti-hegemonic movement of Nawai was frustrated by the colonial authorities before it became a mass movement. Yet the power of the idea that indigenous Fijians had to be economically independent struck a note among many who

realised that they were pawns of the imperial government and the chiefs.

According to Heartfield, Nawai had challenged European privilege and prestige.

He argues that:

The activities of the Fiji Company were particularly provoking to the theory of white prestige, because the natives were, so to speak, taking on the Europeans at their own game.²⁶⁷

Nawai had challenged and questioned the cultural authority of the chiefs who argued that indigenous Fijian participation in commerce would destroy indigenous culture. Nawai responded that the chiefs of Fiji did not want to break European monopoly and had consciously allowed the colonial administration to implement laws to keep indigenous Fijians dependent on Europeans. The Europeans and the colonial government supported the argument of the chiefs because both wanted Europeans to continue their monopoly in commerce and trade. Similar to the Iuveniwaia and Tuka movements, supporters of Nawai were arrested, imprisoned and forced underground and once again the cultural hegemony of the chiefs was imposed on indigenous Fijians with the assistance of the colonial government.

²⁶⁷ James Heartfield, “‘You are not a White Woman!’: Apolosi Nawai, the Fiji Produce Agency and the Trial of Stella Spencer in Fiji,” p. 75.

The Bula Tale Movement

In the 1960s, there was another movement similar to that of Ndugumoi and Nawai. This was called Bula Tale Association which was known as the Blood of the Lamb Movement. The Bula Tale Association openly opposed the Fijian administration and advocated self-help schemes. The leader of the Association remarked:

Do not pin any hopes on our Fijian administrators. It would be like pouring water into bottomless vessels. Our chiefs tend to be like Europeans. They do not want to leave their beautiful houses, shiny cars, and tar-sealed roads to drive along dusty roads to our villages, sleep in our humble homes and eat our simple food.²⁶⁸

The Bula Tale Association attempted to bring indigenous Fijians into the mainstream of economic life, but like its predecessor Viti Company, the Association found itself caught up in the colonial bureaucracy, which still believed that indigenous Fijians ought not to participate in the cash economy because it could ruin their traditional way of life. In fact, Bula Tale was seen as a bigger threat to the establishment since it espoused communist ideas of social and economic development. The chiefs were, in particular, disturbed by foreign ideas being used by Fijian commoners in their protest against the colonial administration.

²⁶⁸Bula Tale spokesperson quoted in Alexander Mamak and Ahmed Ali, **Race, Class and Rebellion in the South Pacific**, (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1979), p. 65.

Realising that Bula Tale posed a formidable threat to the colonial historic bloc, a comprehensive plan was put into operation to subvert the movement. Projects of the Bula Tale group were not approved and communal fund raising was banned for any of the group's projects. Like Iuveniwei, Tuka and Nawai movements, Bula Tale members who pursued agricultural schemes were fined and imprisoned for disturbing the peace in the village. Despite the activities of the movement being outlawed by the colonial government, Bula Tale supporters continued to quietly pursue the work of the movement and in 1984 Durutalo discovered that Bula Tale survived to this day and was based at Yalalevu, Ba.²⁶⁹ In the 1980s, members of the Bula Tale movement played a key role in the formation and success of the Fiji Labour Party (Chapter 6) and the chiefs, in western Viti Levu, associated with the movement have remained forefront in the bid to reform indigenous custom and emphasise the need for full indigenous participation in commerce and trade.

Conclusion

The disintegration of anti-establishment movements was of a particular relief to the colonial government which saw the anti-hegemonic and anti-colonial movements as promoting undesirable influence among indigenous Fijians. But the high-handed approach of the colonial government with the support of the Council of Chiefs forced the movements to go underground and over time, anti-hegemonic movements re-appeared in a different form, incorporating new anti-

²⁶⁹Durutalo, "Internal Colonialism", p. 410.

establishment ideas.

The indigenous Fijian anti-hegemonic movements were successful in developing powerful sub-cultures but failed to establish an alternative historic bloc or counter-hegemony because the Council of Chiefs, the colonial government and the Europeans used colonial laws and the military to undermine the movements.

By the time Apolosi Nawai died, the chiefs had already established themselves as "the official interpreters" of indigenous Fijian custom. Any other ideas, like the ones advocated by anti-hegemonic movements, were labelled "un-traditional" and "un-Fijian" and with the assistance of the colonial government quickly outlawed. The support from the colonial administration in cementing chiefly cultural hegemony strengthened inter-ethnic bonds between the chiefs and the colonial government.

This Chapter has demonstrated the role of cultural influences indigenous Fijian sub-cultural movements. The Hill Tribes, the Tuka, the Luveniwei and Bula Tale movements challenged the cultural hegemony of the indigenous chiefs and posed a threat to the colonial historic bloc, which was internally divided and prone to internal ethnic and cultural conflict. In response, the colonial authorities and the chiefs used the military and the colonial laws to outlaw anti-establishment movements and ideas, resulting in the militarisation of colonial historic bloc. The theme of militarisation of the historic-bloc will re-emerge in post-colonial Fiji when the political and cultural hegemony of the chiefs are

threatened by counter-hegemonic movements in 1987.

While the indigenous Fijian anti-hegemonic movements challenged the colonial historic bloc by developing anti-establishment sub-cultures, they failed to prevail because they could not transform into a mass political movement. All of the indigenous anti-establishment movements were confined to a particular geographic region, allowing colonial authorities to quickly confine and arrest its spread with the aid of the coercive arm of the state. Moreover, the anti-establishment movements were ethnically isolated and failed to form inter-ethnic alliance with Indo-Fijians, whose leaders had separate political agendas (Chapter 5). With challenge from indigenous Fijians to the colonial historic bloc defeated, the chiefs would position themselves to assert political hegemony following World War II.

CHAPTER 5

CULTURAL AND ETHNIC POLITICAL BLOCS

After World War II, the indigenous Fijian chiefs strengthened their political position by consolidating the alliance with the European population of Fiji. Both communities fully participated in the war effort and to an extent shared common cultural interest, namely religion and rugby. By the late 1940s, a number of commoner indigenous Fijians expressed their desire to fight for chiefly hegemony believing that the Council and Chiefs and their previous interventions against alienation of indigenous land and procurement of indigenous labour enabled to a large extent the survival of indigenous Fijians in their own homeland. Moreover, the indigenous Fijians also believed that the Council of Chiefs was the only institution to keep in check the political aspirations of Indo-Fijians. The indigenous chiefs together with the colonial government and the European community established an ethnic and cultural bloc after the war against Indo-Fijian resistance, which challenged the colonial historic bloc after the end of indenture in 1920. There was in 1959 a move among unions to form inter-ethnic class alliances and fracture the European-chief ethnic/cultural bloc but this was defeated by the intervention of indigenous chiefs. More importantly, in the 1960s, the cultural hegemony of the chiefs was transformed into political hegemony following a reinterpretation of the Deed of Cession by the colonial government and the indigenous chiefs in preparation for independence.

The move to consolidate indigenous Fijian cultural and ethnic position was all too urgent after it was disclosed in the 1946 Census Report²⁷⁰ that there were 117,488 indigenous Fijians in the colony and 120,063 Indo-Fijians. Sir Arthur Gordon had added a new element to Fiji society-a large number of Indian settlers, who agitated for political representation after the end of indenture in 1920. The introduction of Indians to Fiji was not only to provide cheap exploitable labour for European planters but to create a third cultural and ethnic category to offset the majority indigenous population. The colonial policy towards each ethnic group demonstrated that each had, in the minds of Gordon and his successors, quite distinct roles. Europeans were managers and employers, Indo-Fijians were labourers and indigenous Fijians were to practice their officially defined communalism and subsistence agriculture.²⁷¹ The separate ethnic and cultural spheres of development bred prejudice, ignorance and suspicion.

Despite the colonial sanctioned ethnic and cultural hierarchy, there were powerful internal divisions among all ethnic groups. However, the indigenous Fijian chiefs and the Europeans were generally united after the war against the Indo-Fijians, who were divided among themselves. Indeed the unity among indigenous Fijians and the Europeans was largely artificial as a number of times the Europeans displayed gross misunderstanding of Fijian custom and initiated actions that undermined the cultural hegemony of the chiefs.

²⁷⁰Census Report 1946.

²⁷¹Tony Chapelle,"Land and Race in Fiji: The Administration of Sir Everard Im Thurn, 1904-1910," Ph.D, University of the South Pacific, 1976, p. 79.

Nevertheless, there was a general consensus among both the indigenous Fijian chiefs and the Europeans after the war on cultural and ethnic cooperation. This Chapter traces the emergence of indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian cultural and political blocs and argues that the colonial legacy played a central part in their formation. In particular, Indo-Fijian agitations against the colonial administration strengthened the European and the chief cultural/ethnic bloc.

On 14 March 1947, a European Member of the Legislative Council, A. A. Ragg moved for the abolition of the Fijian Administration that had been restructured by Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna. According to Ragg, "the Fijian, like the Indian is in a transitional stage of development, and all I desire to attain is the development of these two races on parallel lines so that whatever legal and political privileges are accorded to one may be applied to other."²⁷² The motion of A.A. Ragg was opposed by the Fijian Members of the Legislative Council. According to one indigenous Fijian Member, Joeli Ravai, the Fijian commoners would fight for their chiefs and their custom: "Our chiefs are our chiefs. We respect them, and it is for the commoners to fight for their chiefs. It is only our custom to fight for our own chiefs and to stand by them where it is good or right. We are born to that."²⁷³

Indo-Fijians Members of the Legislative Council were not fully aware of the indigenous Fijian attachment to their land and their chiefs. It was erroneously

²⁷²Legislative Council Debates, 14 March 1947, p.108.

²⁷³Legislative Council Debates, 14 March 1947, p.113.

argued by Indo-Fijian leaders that extending franchise to indigenous Fijians would enhance their social and political development. Indo-Fijian MP, Pundit Vishnu Deo²⁷⁴, while commenting on common roll, hoped that franchise would be extended to the indigenous Fijians in an attempt to modernise the community. The Indo-Fijian leader, A.D. Patel noted that indigenous Fijians had certain privileges and that "educationally, the indigenous Fijians are ahead of the Indo-Fijians and coming to the question of their economic conditions, they are the privileged land-owning class of Fiji."²⁷⁵

The Indo-Fijians and the indigenous Fijians did not have any intricate knowledge of each others customs, traditions and the way of life. Such being the case, ignorance largely prevailed with each community having its separate sphere of development and interaction. The lack of understanding between Fiji's two dominant communities became a political problem by the 1960s when steps were undertaken to introduce self-government and eventually independence.

There was, however, a similarity between the indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian anti-hegemonic movements. Both in fact were anti-colonial and anti-establishment but since both communities were isolated in their own respective communal spheres, a collaborative effort against the colonial historic bloc never materialised. Indigenous Fijian anti-hegemony was anti-colonial and against collaborator chiefs while the Indo-Fijian one was anti-colonial and specifically

²⁷⁴Legislative Council Debates, 26 August 1943, p.64.

²⁷⁵Legislative Council Debates, 9 December 1949, pp. 378-379.

directed at the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR). It is imperative that political development of Indo-Fijians in Fiji be historically examined to understand the ethnic and cultural separateness between the two anti-hegemonic movements.

Indo-Fijian Resistance

Indo-Fijian anti-colonial resistance movements were shaped by the unique Indian cultural experience of indenture, which left the Indo-Fijian community totally devastated. In India, Indo-Fijians were promised by the recruiters that Fiji was a place where they could acquire wealth and status and escape the environmental extremities of Northern India. Once in Fiji, the Indo-Fijians realised that they have been deceived and condemned for five years of bonded labour. With the deception came the authoritarian colonial system, which established a hierarchical system of plantation administration with the European overseers in charge of production, labour discipline and general management.

Indenture (Girmit)

In 1879 the colonial government, under the leadership of Governor Sir Arthur Gordon, started to import Indians under the indentured labour scheme, which existed in the British colonies since the 1837. The Indians were to come to Fiji and work for five years as bonded labourers and another five as free workers

after which they became entitled to a paid trip back to India. Those Indian labourers who did not wish to return to India were allowed to stay in the colony as British subjects. Fiji's colonial authorities quickly established recruiting offices in Calcutta and from 1905 in South India. The recruiting office hired sub-agents, who were paid to entice sometimes gullible and illiterate peasants from India's United Provinces. According to Adrian Mayer, "recruiters played on the ignorance of the peasants saying for instance that Fiji was a place near Calcutta; or exaggerated the value of the wages to be earned whilst saying nothing about the penal nature of the indenture contract."²⁷⁶

While the colonial regime in Fiji recruited physically fit men, they deliberately neglected the number of female intake, thereby creating competition for sexual partners on the sugar plantations in Fiji, resulting in suicide and murder. Brij Lal²⁷⁷ notes that in the case of Fiji, there were altogether 13,696 females and 31,458 males transported during the period of indentured emigration. Indian women who emigrated to Fiji were believed to be fleeing social scorn in India. However in Fiji, Indian women were sexually exploited by Indian male labourers and European overseers. The result was high suicide rate and violence against women. Between 1885 and 1920, 96 indentured immigrants in Fiji were murdered of whom 68 were women and 28 men.²⁷⁸ It is the plight of the indentured women that provided anti-indenture activists with "moral" and

²⁷⁶ Adrian C. Mayer, **Peasants in the Pacific**, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1961), p.2.

²⁷⁷ Brij Lal, **Girmitiyas: The Origins of the Fiji Indians**, (Canberra: The Journal of Pacific History, 1983), p.102.

²⁷⁸ Brij Lal, "Kunti's Cry: Indentured Women on Fiji Plantation," **The Indian Economic and Social History Review**, Vol.22, No.1, p.137.

“ethical” grounds to condemn the labour traffic.

The two most publicised stories of oppression against Indians in Fiji related to sexual attacks on Indian indentured women by European overseers. These stories were used by anti-indenture activists in India, in particular, Totaram Sanadhya, Indian journalist Benarsidas Chaturvedi, C.F. Andrews and Mohandas Gandhi, to pressure the British government for an immediate end to the labour scheme. To avoid further criticisms and activism by Indian nationalists in both India and abroad, the British colonial administrators abrogated indenture in 1916. The end of indenture was a relief to anti-indenture activists but what was to become of the Indians in Fiji? A few Indians from Fiji returned to India, but a majority stayed in the colony and established permanent homes. Once the Indians were released from the authoritarian labour system, they diverted their attention to political and social issues, including demands for better living conditions, wages, and political representation. For the Indians in Fiji, the struggle after indenture was for recognition of their labour and self respect.

According to Ahmed Ali,²⁷⁹ the Indo-Fijians wanted to regain their izzat (self-respect) lost during indenture and thus after indenture formally ended in 1920, the former indenture labourers organised and challenged the authority of the racist and authoritarian colonial regime through a wave of strikes in 1920 and 1921.

²⁷⁹Ahmed Ali, "The Fiji Indo-Fijians," Subramani (ed), **The Indo-Fijian Experience**, (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1979), p.11.

The 1920 and the 1921 Strikes

Before the strikes, the Indo-Fijians were looked upon with sympathy by the colonial government. A Select Committee Report²⁸⁰ dated 24 August 1915 suggested that the Colony accept the very liberal offer by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR) of a loan up to 100,000 pounds for the purpose of purchasing lands to be devoted to the settlement of Indo-Fijians. The recommendations of the Select Committee were approved on 14 March 1916 and on 11 July of the same year the Indian Land Settlement Bill was presented to the Legislative Council.

In his address on the subject of the settlement of time-expired Indo-Fijians, Governor Sir Ernest Bickham Sweet Escott, KCGM stated on 24 August 1917:

In considering the present position of Indo-Fijians in this Colony who are no longer under indenture in relation to the system of indentured labour, it is interesting to note that no less than 115,635 acres of land are under lease to 11,044 Indian tenants. The prosperity enjoyed by the Indo-Fijians who are not under indenture indicates that steady habits of industry and some knowledge of agriculture were acquired by them during the period of their indentures.²⁸¹

By 1920, Europeans had become disenchanted with the Indo-Fijians and like-

²⁸⁰Select Committee Report on the Indian Land Settlement, 24 August 1915.

²⁸¹Legislative Council Debates, 24 August 1917, p.52.

wise indigenous Fijian chiefs saw the time-expired Indo-Fijians as a troublesome group. After indenture, political activists from India and from other British Colonies found their way to Fiji. One such person, Doctor Maganlal Manilal came to Fiji from Mauritius to improve the political and social situation of Indo-Fijians in the colony. In Fiji, Manilal established the Indian Imperial Association, which became a front for disseminating anti-colonial propaganda. Not long after arriving to Fiji, Manilal became popular in the community after he successfully fought the colonial justice system for the protection of legal rights of Indo-Fijians.

By the end of indenture, some Indo-Fijians had left plantation and taken up low-paying jobs with the Public Works Department. Low wages and objectionable living conditions forced Indo-Fijians towards Manilal. In 1920, the Indian Municipal workers in the greater Suva area went on strike. The Indian workers wanted to improve their economic condition, but Manilal took the opportunity to make a political point. The colonial government knew precisely the direction in which Doctor Manilal was taking the strike and quickly despatched armed constables to subdue the workers by force. The 1920 strike was broken and Manilal was deported. Finally, the political demands of the workers were set aside and economic concessions were granted following a Select Committee Report.

While the urban Indo-Fijians established that they had the numbers to extract economic concessions, the labourers in the sugar areas of Western Viti Levu

were equally determined. Under the leadership of one Sadhu (holy man) Basist Muni, cane farmers went on strike in 1921 against the CSR²⁸² which was accused of profiteering on the backs of Indo-Fijian labourers who lived in abject poverty. At first Basist Muni attempted to initiate dialogue with the Company but each time his efforts failed, because the CSR objected to all the workers' requests. Realising that it was futile to continue talks, Basist Muni organised one of the longest strikes in the post-indenture period. For six months the cane farmers quit work and threw support behind their leader. The Colonial government and the CSR waited and hoped that the strike would lose momentum, but Basist Muni was determined and expanded his political agenda by calling for an immediate release of those involved in the 1920 strike.

Like Manilal, Basist Muni was accused by the colonial government of having hidden political motives to disrupt the economy of the colony and as such, Muni was also deported. Basist Muni's struggle for better living condition and wages from the CSR produced the desired result in favour of the workers, but there was in both urban and rural strikes an apparent schism between the economic demands of the Indo-Fijian community and the political demands of their leaders. Since both Manilal and Basist Muni had come from India and were more politically conscious, they took a broader socio-political approach when fighting the colonial government and the Colonial Sugar Refining Company.

²⁸²See Wadan Lal Narsey, "Monopoly Capital, White Racism and Super Profits: The Case Study of the CSR," **Journal of Pacific Studies**, Volume 5, 1979, pp.66-146.

The response from the colonial government to the anti-establishment agitations from Indo-Fijian leaders was similar to the strategy used against indigenous sub-cultural Tuka and Nawai movements (Chapter 4). The leaders of both Indo-Fijian and indigenous Fijian anti-hegemonic movements were deported or exiled and colonial laws and military force were used to subdue further outbreak of protests. While there was a clear use of military and police authority to enforce colonial hegemony, the strikes of 1920 and 1921 led to further ethnicisation of the military after colonial authorities recruited and deployed indigenous troops against Indo-Fijians.

Preference by the colonial authorities to recruit indigenous Fijian men would continue well beyond World War II and by independence indigenous Fijians would form a permanent ethnic bloc in the Fiji military force.

Divisions among Indo-Fijians

After the deportation of Manilal and Basist Muni, the Indo-Fijians in Fiji saw an army of missionaries and religious agents from various South Indian, North Indian, Gujarati and Muslim denominations entering the country. It was these agents, mainly communalists from "Mother India", who encouraged religious factions and by 1926, the Fiji Muslim League²⁸³ and Then India Sanmarga Ikya Sangam were formed. Sangam was founded in Nadi at a meeting of the South Indo-Fijians held on 24 May 1924 and by 1928 Sangam had its own office at

²⁸³Ahmed Ali, "The Emergence of Muslim Separatism in Fiji," **Plural Societies**, Vol.8, No.1, 1977, pp. 57-68.

the Nadi Ashram building, which was made available for the organisation by the wealthy Lautoka businessman, Mr. M. N. Naidu. Sangam, however, quickly transformed from a social organisation to a political one with the involvement in that organisation of A.D. Patel and Swami Rudranand.

Both Patel and Rudranand were from India. A.D. Patel was a rich Gujarati who completed his law degree and joined the movement of Mahatma Gandhi before coming to Fiji in 1928. According to an account by Swami Rudranand²⁸⁴, Patel was fully involved with the Sangam and whenever the Sangam organisation was in financial difficulties, A.D. Patel came forward with generous donations and also took up responsibilities in partnership along with other members of the Sangam. Swami Rudranand, however, was from Tamil Nadu, and at the request of the Fiji Sangam organisation, Swamiji was sent to Fiji in 1939. After his arrival in the colony, Rudranand earnestly put his effort into improving education facilities for the Indian students. It was through his hard work that Shri Vivekananda High School was officially opened in 1949 in Nadi-the first School in the West under private Indo-Fijian management.

The leaders from India, even though visionary, espoused communalism with notable exceptions. A.D. Patel was anti-colonial in his outlook because he was influenced by the anti-British movement in India and as such, he became one of the major proponents of independence for the Colony of Fiji. However, apart from the preoccupation about the status of the colony, Patel was an active

²⁸⁴Rev. Swami Rudranand on Honourable A.D. Patel, **50th Anniversary of the Sangam**, 1976, p.40.

political agent for the privileged Indo-Fijians. The post-indenture Fiji brought to surface new political and religious reality. The girmit concept, of being "jihaji" or boat people experiencing European, died a premature death after indenture. Even within the predominantly North Indian Hindu community, there were struggles for communal dominance and this often found expression through imported ideas from India- particularly the struggles between the Hindu orthodox Sanatan Dharam and the reform-oriented Arya Samaj movements.

John Dunham Kelly²⁸⁵ has done an in-depth analysis of the divisions between the two Hindu religious factions. Sanatan Dharam was for caste division, child-marriage, priest dominance, and was against education for women and widow remarriage. Sanatan Dharam used "Ramayan" to justify priest-led social order, but this was challenged by Arya Samaji, which preached education for all and cautioned against priest dominance. One of the leading figures in the Arya Samaj movement was Pundit Vishnu Deo who in 1929 was elected to the Legislative Council on Indian communal vote²⁸⁶ and on taking office moved a motion for a common roll. Immediately, the motion was defeated by the members of the Council. According to Ali, "Indo-Fijians desired common roll not to dominate others, as their opponents suggested, but to attain equality which they thought was theirs of right as citizens."²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ John D. Kelly, **Hinduism, Sexuality and Countercolonial Discourse in Fiji**, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); also see "Bhakti and the Spirit of Capitalism," PhD thesis, University of Chicago, 1988.

²⁸⁶ Three Indo-Fijian communal seats were reserved for the community from 1929 by the Governor following extensive lobby from Indo-Fijian leaders.

²⁸⁷ Ahmed Ali, "Fiji Indian Politics," **The Journal of Pacific Studies**, Volume 4, 1978, p.4.

After the defeat of common roll motion, the three members of the Legislative Council-Vishnu Deo, Parmanand Singh and K.B. Singh-resigned in protest. It was not until 1936 when negotiations took place for a compromise when C.F. Andrews came to the Colony at the invitation of the Indian Association. It was decided that the Indian community in Fiji would postpone their claim to common franchise until such time as conditions were more favourable and when other communities could be convinced that such a course was the wisest one. While Indian political leaders agreed to defer their call for common roll, divisions within the community surfaced with the establishment of Fiji Kisan Sangh in 1936 under the leadership of Ayodhya Prasad and B.D. Lakshman. However, A.D. Patel and Rudranand criticised the "accommodationist" attitude of the Sangh and formed a rival Maha Sangh in 1943.

The 1943 Strike

It was Patel who led the 1943 strike against the CSR which was accused of profiteering on the backs of Indo-Fijian farmers. The 1943 Indo-Fijian strike was interpreted differently by the colonial government and its indigenous Fijian allies. For them, the strike was political, aimed at undermining the imperial war-effort and extracting economic concessions. Relations between Indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians deteriorated after the war. In 1936²⁸⁸, Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna in an address to the Council of Chiefs spoke in favour of the Indo-Fijians, but this view had drastically changed following Indo-Fijian non-

²⁸⁸Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna at the Great Council of Chiefs Meeting in September 1936.

participation in the war effort. For many indigenous Fijians, it was clear disloyalty on the part of the Indo-Fijians whose leaders were accused by the colonial administration of being nothing more than political opportunists.

Indo-Fijian reluctance to volunteer for the war led the colonial government to approach the Council of Chiefs which called on indigenous Fijians to defend Fiji against Japanese expansionism. As a result, many able-bodied indigenous men enlisted and were recommended for numerous citations for their valour on the battlefield. The mass recruitment of indigenous Fijians to the Royal Fiji Military Forces restructured the ethnic and the cultural makeup of the armed forces and assisted in strengthening the alliance between Europeans and indigenous Fijians. By the end of the war, the ethnicisation of the military was complete and Indo-Fijian leaders had played a large part in excluding Indo-Fijians from the army.

Besides Indo-Fijian non-participation in the war, there was an equal fear of rising Indo-Fijian population. The rapid growth of Indo-Fijian population caused serious alarm among indigenous Fijians. In 1921, there were 60,634 Indo-Fijians in the Colony of Fiji. However, this number rose to 120,063 by 1946 against indigenous Fijians whose number was 117,488. By 1956, Indo-Fijians constituted 49 per cent of the total population, while indigenous Fijians were trailing at 42.85 per cent.

In 1956, some 18.3 per cent²⁸⁹ of the Fiji's population were living in urban areas and there was a huge income and occupational disparity between the two races. With the emergence of Suva as a city in 1953, indigenous Fijians slowly moved to the urban centre and as economist Carleen O' Loughlin noted: "indigenous Fijians, when they are employed as wage earners, tend to be concentrated in a few industries such as mining, building and construction and stevedoring."²⁹⁰ The migration of indigenous Fijians to Suva allowed cross-cultural collaboration to take place for the first time, especially in the union movement which were largely multiethnic in character. Such being the case, there was a slow emerging class consciousness among indigenous Fijians involved in the labour unions, even though this class element was enveloped in race, because the workers were indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians, and the employers were entirely Europeans.

The exploitation of Indo-Fijian and indigenous Fijian workers by Europeans led to the formation of the Fiji Wholesale and Retail Workers Union (FWRWU), which went on strike in December 1959 against European oil cartels.

The 1959 Strike

The 1959 strike was an example of class-based collaboration between Indo-Fijians and the indigenous Fijians against the colonial historic bloc. For first

²⁸⁹ Norma Mc Arthur, Census Commissioner of Fiji, **Report on the Census of the Population**, Legislative Council Paper No. 1, 1958, p.9.

²⁹⁰ Carleen O' Loughlin, **The Pattern of the Fiji Economy: The National Income 1950-53**, Legislative Council Paper No. 44, 1956, pp. 5-37.

time in the colonial history, both ethnic groups banded together in urban Suva to demand better wages and working conditions from a multinational oil company.

On 7 December 1959, the Fiji Wholesale and Retail Workers Union leaders- President of the Union Ratu Meli, Secretary James Anthony and Lautoka branch President Mohammed Tora- agreed to proceed with the strike action against the oil companies- Vacuum Oil Company and Shell. On the same day, an oil tanker in the Shell depot was blocked by between 100 to 150 people who prevented the tanker from leaving. Shortly after that incident, James Anthony addressed a meeting of several hundred strikers and stated that "he didn't care two hoots if Suva had no electricity..."²⁹¹

By 8 December, the Assistant Colonial Secretary took the strike seriously and instructed the commander of the Fiji Military Forces to provide military personnel to distribute fuel to the Nadi International Airport. Oil company employees in Lautoka and Nadi were also on strike at the same time as their comrades in Suva. The moves by the colonial authority to weaken the strike by the use of army and police officers led Ratu Meli and James Anthony to launch a complaint with the senior Labour Officer to the effect that the government was siding with the employers. On 9 December, the situation started to deteriorate after government representatives and oil companies reached an agreement to supply petrol to four petrol stations with the aid of armed Special Constables.

²⁹¹ The Fiji Times 8 December 1959.

Immediately, the oil workers started to hold gatherings throughout the city with the aim of intimidating those who went to buy petrol.

Police Headquarters received continuous calls on the expressed anti-European feeling during union gatherings. By 10 December, the union members and their supporters resorted to force and started throwing stones at European cars. "By 9:00 am, Many European cars had been stoned. Stinson's shop was severely stoned. Crowd in the city were rushing around near the Transport Office, yelling and rioting and the police were very active in keeping them on the move, trying to prevent damage and arresting all the law breakers."²⁹² The Fiji Military Forces were immediately despatched and according to an eyewitness account of Detective Sergeant Waisea Waqa, ex-convicts and people of "objectionable character" joined the riot. As a result of the disturbances, indigenous Fijian chiefs and a number of Indo-Fijian leaders summoned a meeting of the protestors at Albert Park. The meeting at Albert Park was addressed by B.D. Laksman, Ratu Meli, Ratu Edward Cakobau and Ratu George Cakobau who in their capacity appealed for calm. Indigenous Fijians present at the gathering were reminded to guard against being misled by opportunistic leaders. In addition, Ratu Edward Cakobau, Ratu Penaia Ganilau, Andrew Deoki, and Livai Volavola went around in a vehicle advising people not to cause any further disturbances.²⁹³

²⁹²**Report of Commission of Inquiry into the Disturbances in Suva December, 1959**, Legislative Council of Fiji, Council Paper No. 10 of 1960, p.14.

²⁹³Ibid, p.15.

On 15 December 1959, the strike was settled by an agreement between the parties to arbitrate the dispute. Unfortunately, whatever class consciousness or inter-ethnic cooperation that had developed during the strike died a premature death when on 17 December, 1959, Pacific Review, a publication committed to Indo-Fijian viewpoint, pointed out that an indigenous Fijian Member of the Legislative Council, Semesa Sikivou, suggested that the indigenous Fijian people should attack Indo-Fijians in Fiji. The indigenous Fijian Member, accused of spreading racial hatred, emphatically dis-claimed in the Legislative Council any such rumours.²⁹⁴ But the indigenous Fijian community and its leaders remained extremely suspicious of Indo-Fijian motives and designs, thereby reinforcing ethnic and cultural exclusiveness of both communities. An indigenous Fijian letter writer remarked:

A majority of the wealthy people in Fiji are now Indo-Fijians. They hold high posts in government, they run big businesses and they are mostly the only race that is renting their houses to peasants, who are mostly indigenous Fijians.²⁹⁵

Indigenous Fijian concerns about Indo-Fijians were documented in the Burns Report of 1960.²⁹⁶ Equally important was the 1959 Spate Report²⁹⁷ in which Professor Spate pointed out the friendly relations between the Europeans and

²⁹⁴The Fiji Times, 9 January 1960.

²⁹⁵The Fiji Times, 16 January 1960.

²⁹⁶**Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Natural Resources and Population Trends of the Colony of Fiji**, Legislative Council of Fiji, Council Paper No.1 of 1960.

²⁹⁷Professor O.H.K. Spate, **Economic Problems and Prospects of the Fijian People**, Legislative Council of Fiji, Council Paper No. 13 of 1959.

the indigenous Fijians. Indigenous Fijian Officers and men were decorated for services in the Solomon Islands and Malaya and the indigenous Fijian troops generally received high tributes for their gallantry and efficiency. Many indigenous Fijian witnesses to both the Spate and Burns Commissions repeatedly emphasised Indo-Fijian disloyalty and lack of courage. Indigenous Fijians were generally anxious about their land and their economic backwardness in comparison to Indo-Fijians. Many indigenous Fijians suggested to the Burns Commission that all the Indo-Fijians in the Colony should be deported to India. Some “moderate” indigenous Fijians recommended that all Indo-Fijians in excess of a certain number should be made to leave the colony immediately. Interestingly, some Indo-Fijians agreed to the indigenous Fijian suggestions and recommended the deportation of Punjabis and Gujaratis.²⁹⁸

On the indigenous Fijian side there was repeated emphasis on the Deed of Cession which formed both the ideological and legal basis for indigenous Fijian ownership of their land and the country. During the 80th Anniversary of the Cession celebrations in 1954, Ratu Sukuna advised the indigenous Fijian people that soon indigenous Fijians will be appointed to rule over their people with the lands ceded to Her Majesty returned to its rightful owners. As mentioned before, indigenous Fijians did not trust Indo-Fijians and that suspicion continued to be solidified by the actions of the Indo-Fijian leadership, in particular in the cane belt areas. The ten year sugar contract had expired on

²⁹⁸Council Paper No. 1 of 1960, p.13.

31 May 1960 and June of that year discussions between the growers and the sugar industry ended without an agreement and as such the stage was set for another round of confrontation between the Indo-Fijian Cane Grower's Association and the Colonial Sugar Refining Company.

The 1960 Cane Harvest Boycott

The Colonial Sugar Refining Company held the sugar monopoly in Fiji with the Company's assets valued at 5 million pounds in 1957 and 13 million pounds in 1958. The Company being the only buyer of cane in the Colony took advantage of its monopolistic position and paid as little as possible to the Indo-Fijian cane growers. On 30 June 1960, the Governor of the Colony put forward a contingency plan to start the harvest, but was rejected by the newly-formed Cane Growers Federation led by A.D. Patel. Under the old cane contract, the Company was bound to give notice to farmers in case of a strike and all cane harvested with the authority of the Company before such notice was given was paid for by the Company. Under the new Company proposal, the Company wanted to take no responsibility.

On 16 July 1960, the farmers met to discuss the harvest situation at various centres in the Western districts. It was agreed that the sale of 80 per cent of the cane will be at the 1959 price. The Company remained adamant and refused to acquiesce to the farmers' demands. But as events unfolded, it was disclosed that the farmers were divided over the boycott issue and some Indo-Fijian

leaders had taken the opportunity to strike a deal with the Company. On 24 July 1960, Ayodhya Prasad, J.P. Bayly and Vijay Singh signed an agreement with the Colonial Sugar Refining Company and immediately following the disclosure of the deal, Indo-Fijian leader Siddiq Koya explained that "the agreement was an infamous act played by the breakaway leaders in smashing the unity of the farmers' front."²⁹⁹

On 25 July, A.D. Patel at a rally in Nadi and Ba advised the farmers that:

Unless the agreement for sale and purchase of sugar cane between the CSR Company and the growers' unions is signed by all 19 representatives, this meeting considers any other as invalid and no grower should commence harvesting his crop.³⁰⁰

The breakaway group was accused by the Cane Growers Federation of colluding with the Company, and a Joint Federation Committee met on 17 August 1960 to start fresh negotiations. Without any hope in sight, an audience was sought with the Governor and on 1 September, A.D. Patel, S.B. Patel and S.M. Koya met to discuss a new offer which was rejected outright. On 4 September, a series of meetings took place with a big gathering of protesting farmers in Ba. Farmers were informed by their leaders to burn their cane after giving three days notice to the government. The Secretary of State for the Colonies, Ian Macleod, strongly condemned the suggestion of burning cane.

²⁹⁹Pacific Review, 11 August 1960.

³⁰⁰Ibid.

A.D. Patel was of the opinion that farmers could use cane boycott to extract economic concessions from the Company. However, the CSR was concerned about increasing militancy in the cane belt and on 14 September 1960 the Company announced increased sugar quota for Fiji.

The assurances of the CSR did little to appease the farmers, but a more pressing problem was that of an apparent split among those leading the farmers. On 17 September, a farmers meeting in Rakiraki affirmed faith in the Federation leadership and those leaders who chose to work with the Company were branded "traitors." In fact, the 24 July agreement between a breakaway faction of the farmers and the Company was a blow against the Federation and in particular to A.D. Patel who had been instrumental in bringing various farmers' unions together. On 15 October 1960, the Federation held a meeting at Churchill Park in Lautoka and resolved the following:

1. To reject the 24 July agreement;
2. To condemn the conduct of the government; and
3. To condemn the actions of the breakaway group- J.P. Bayly, Siv Nath, Ayodhya Prasad, D.S. Sharma and Vijay Singh.

To break the deadlock between the farmers' unions and the Company, the colonial government set up a Commission of Inquiry into the Sugar Industry led by Sir Malcolm Trustram Eve. On 28 January 1961, A.D. Patel told a gathering in Nadi that the decisions of the Eve Commission would not bind any party, and

that the Federation Committee had decided to get a sugar expert from India. The expert from India was R.B. Lal Mathur, an Indian sugar technologist. His submission to the Eve Commission on 13 March 1961 highlighted the situation of the Indo-Fijians in Fiji.

In Fiji, these Indian workers were not actually rewarded for their labour and, instead of giving them land in donation or on a hire-purchase system, they have been given land on a tenant basis. You will realise this vast difference when a man feels that this land belongs to him; he is the owner of the land. But when he considers that he is only a tenant, he cannot put his head and heart solely in his work so long as he considers he is a tenant.³⁰¹

The deadlock between the unions and the Company was finally broken when on 26 March 1961, an agreement was reached between the CSR and all the associations of the cane growers on the price and conditions of selling and buying cane. It was agreed that all sound cane planted before the end of 1960 will be bought. A delivery payment of 36/- a ton within 6 weeks after delivery; a second payment of 9/- ton within 8 weeks after the end of the crushing season; and a final payment no later than 30 June 1962. Two months after an agreement between the sugar unions and the Company was concluded, a bizarre article appeared in Sydney titled "The Need for Unity of Thought and Action in relation to the Future of Fiji." Written by the Director of Fiji Times and Herald Limited, R.W. Robson, the article appeared in the Sydney Morning

³⁰¹R.B.Lal Mathur's Submission to the Eve Commission, 13 March 1961.

Herald on 16 May 1961, in part it argued:

The relationship between Fijian and the Indian communities, unfortunately, has been exacerbated by the bitter quarrel in the Fiji sugar industry during 1960 where a noisy and an irresponsible section of the Indian community did not hesitate to sacrifice the country's interest and the interest of the Fijian community to purposes which were completely selfish, in a sectional sense. The general effect of the 1960 situation in the country's leading industry was to shape and harden Fijian suspicions regarding the political plans of the Indian community.³⁰²

Indigenous Fijians had largely suspected Indo-Fijian leaders of being agents of instability in the Colony and now with the support of Europeans, the flames of racism were fanned with even greater ferocity. In hindsight, a lack of understanding of indigenous Fijian culture, tradition and aspirations by Indo-Fijian leaders did not in any way improve the situation, and calls for independence from 1962 onwards by an aggressive Indo-Fijian leadership heightened indigenous Fijian fears. In a climate charged with racial tensions, comments by foreign powers, with the exception of Britain, were seen as political interference in the domestic affairs of the Colony.

On 2 January 1962, Indian Defence Minister, V.K. Krishna Menon stated that

³⁰²R.W.Robson, "The Need for Unity of Thought and Action in Relation to the Future of Fiji," Sydney Morning Herald, 16 May, 1961. Reprinted in the **Pacific Review**, 8 June 1961.

"neither we nor any civilised country recognise the sovereignty of a colonial power over territories and people under its control."³⁰³ Quickly, The Fiji Times³⁰⁴ went on the offensive reporting that Minister Menon's comments implied that the Indian government does not recognise the authority of Britain over the islands. Precisely at the same time, the United Nations General Assembly was deliberating on the "colonial question" of Africa in its 16th Annual Session and India, being the foremost state in support of de-colonisation, made its case for independence for all the colonies under Britain. Fiji was in fact moving in the direction of self-government if not outright independence with the proposed changes in the composition of the Legislative Council of Fiji.³⁰⁵ Since 1936, the composition of the Legislative Council remained unchanged with 16 official and 15 unofficial members, the latter being composed of 5 Europeans, 5 indigenous Fijians, and 5 Indo-Fijians. In the case of both the European and the Indo-Fijian members, three were directly elected on separate communal rolls and two nominated by the Governor. The indigenous Fijian members, in contrast, were indirectly elected by the Council of Chiefs.

In response to the Burns Commission Report, the Council of Chiefs in August of 1960 agreed to extend the franchise and referred the matter to the Fijian Affairs Board (FAB) which recommended that all indigenous Fijians over the age of 21 and literate in vernacular shall be qualified to cast a vote. With

³⁰³India News, 2 January 1962.

³⁰⁴Fiji Times and Herald, 5 January, 1962.

³⁰⁵**Proposed Changes in the Composition of the Legislative Council**, Legislative Council of Fiji, Council Paper No. 40 of 1961.

respect to the distribution of seats, the Governor of the Colony of Fiji noted that Indo-Fijian members were opposed to the suggestion that indigenous Fijians should have additional seats. However, Indo-Fijian members reiterated their support for a common roll and also wished for an unofficial majority. The Indo-Fijian community, however, was not unanimous in their viewpoint as Muslims called for a separate Muslim electoral roll.

Governor Maddocks remarked in his submission that indigenous Fijians shall be given additional seats to safeguard indigenous Fijian interests:

One additional seat for indigenous Fijians would not provide additional safeguard. It is the duty of the Governor to ensure that the legitimate rights of all the peoples of Fiji are protected; but he has special obligations to the Indigenous Fijians by virtue of the Deed of Cession and the promises made by successive Governors about the ownership of Indigenous Fijian land.³⁰⁶

The Governor endorsed an electoral system whereby four indigenous Fijian members were directly elected by the indigenous Fijians for the first time in Fiji's political history and two members elected by the Great Council of Chiefs. There were also to be six European members and six Indo-Fijians elected on communal seats. As indicated, moves to introduce elections to Fiji's Legislative Council was seen by both Indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians as a

³⁰⁶Ibid, p. 3.

step in the direction of self government. However, both communities had different aspirations with the Indo-Fijian leaders adopting a strategy of constantly agitating for independence and the indigenous Fijian leaders resisting such a push.

It was generally understood by the indigenous Fijian leaders that the call for a common roll franchise by the Indian leaders would seriously undermine indigenous Fijian interest, and indications that Indo-Fijian leaders supported independence for Fiji were seen with equal suspicion. As early as 1963³⁰⁷, the Great Council of Chiefs resolved to support with caution the efforts of Mr. Nigel Fisher, a British emissary, who held discussions on the constitutional future of the country with various communities. By 1963, Indo-Fijians had resolved that the time was right to push for independence for the Colony of Fiji. Statements by the British delegation on the United Nations Special Committee on Colonialism had provided the catalyst needed by the Indo-Fijian leaders in Fiji to push for constitutional change.

Nigel Fisher suggested to the colonial government of the Colony of Fiji that "a form of constitutional relationship with Britain comparable with that of the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands might provide the basis for an enduring constitutional framework."³⁰⁸

³⁰⁷ Secretary of State Despatch No. 388, 15 August, 1963.

³⁰⁸ **Address by His Excellency the Governor**, Legislative Council of Fiji, Council Paper No. 25 of 1963, p.3.

The Secretary of State, however, questioned the findings of Mr. Fisher and pointed out that the circumstances of the Channel Islands were in many respect different from those of Fiji. It was conceded that Fiji should move towards some form of internal self-government and possibly adopt a "Member System."³⁰⁹ In 1963, Indo-Fijian leader A.D. Patel was elected to the Legislative Council of Fiji and immediately started a campaign for franchise and common roll for indigenous Fijians. The Indo-Fijian leaders knew that moves were afoot to extend franchise to indigenous Fijians and that the Council of Chiefs and the colonial government favourably considered such moves as part of the overall strategy to "modernise" the indigenous Fijians politically.

It was assumed that once indigenous Fijians started electing their members and exercising electoral power, the Indo-Fijians could persuade their indigenous counterparts to join the Indo-Fijian struggle for independence and common roll. This was wishful thinking on the part of the Indo-Fijian leaders, who erroneously believed that there would automatically be collaboration between the two communities in Fiji.

The Emergence of Rival Ethnic Political Blocs

The Push for Independence

The Indo-Fijian anti-hegemonic activities against the colonial historic bloc were

³⁰⁹Legislative Council of Fiji, Council Paper No.8 of 1961.

different to the indigenous Fijian anti-establishment movements that were discussed in Chapter 4. While there were divisions within each ethnic/cultural bloc, there was greater division among Indo-Fijians and by the 1960s, the chiefs had largely expunged indigenous dissent and were calling for ethnic/cultural solidarity with the Europeans. Indo-Fijian leaders in the 1960s increasingly faced indigenous Fijian chiefs in what was turning out to be a two-way struggle for political power with the indigenous Fijian chiefs institutionally and politically positioned within the colonial system to takeover government, which would be based on a form of a singular ethnic pro-indigenous consciousness.

A new historic bloc under the hegemony of the indigenous Fijian chiefs, similar to the Bauan historic bloc, was formed in the 1960s. Indo-Fijian leadership attempted to persuade the chiefs to be wary of the colonial government and the Europeans but it was of no avail. In the following sub-headings, we shall look at the political history of the push for independence by the Indo-Fijian leaders and the emergence of distinct ethnic/cultural positions on the future of the country. Robert Norton argues that there was potential basis for some eventual agreement between indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian leaders to rid Fiji of European power and paternalism.³¹⁰ However, the indigenous Fijian chiefs wanted total political control as was the case before cession to Britain, and the chiefs would achieve this by forming a party where a minority of Indo-Fijians and the Europeans would come together in accepting the political hegemony of

³¹⁰ Robert Norton, "Accommodating Indigenous Privilege: Britain's Dilemma in Decolonising Fiji," **The Journal of Pacific History**, Vol. 37, No.2, 2002, p.155.

the chiefs.

As early as January 1964 Indo-Fijian leader A.D. Patel declared:

The time has come to shape the future of the colony. Now
Constitutional developments are coming. The Indo-Fijian community,
like the others, should be united and with the cooperation of all must
take its due place in the set up.³¹¹

Earlier that month, Indo-Fijian newspaper *Shanti Dut* indicated that the people of Fiji wanted to move towards independence in stages and that the emergence of sectarian organisations would hinder the development of inter-racial harmony. *Shanti Dut* pleaded with the colonial government to discourage denominational bodies.³¹² By then, indigenous Fijians had developed their position in the *Wakaya* letter, which established that any transfer of power from the British Crown should be based on the historic Deed of Cession and the colonial governors' promises to the chiefs thereafter. Indigenous Fijian Member of the Legislative Council, Ratu Mara, in the Council on 17 January 1964³¹³ reaffirmed the *Wakaya* letter and stated that the indigenous Fijian members had given him the authority to initiate discussions on constitutional matters. The indigenous Fijian political position had been established by the *Wakaya* letter and discussions on Fiji's constitutional and political future, as far as the

³¹¹ A.D. Patel at the public meetings of electors of his constituency held from 11-12 January 1964 at Lautoka, Nadi and Sigatoka quoted in *Pacific Review*, 16 January 1964.

³¹² *Shanti Dut* 2 January 1964.

³¹³ *Legislative Council Debates*, 17 January, 1964, p.7.

indigenous Fijians were concerned, would be based on the resolve of the chiefs to govern Fiji after independence.

On 17 January 1964, the Fiji Legislative Council in a special session passed unanimously the motion in favour of the introduction of a Member System of government. Ratu Mara favoured prescribed structures to cement indigenous Fijian chiefly hegemony in an independent Fiji. With a Member System in place and the possibility of independence, both indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians started to politically position themselves within their respective cultural blocs. Indigenous Fijian students studying in London contributed to the independence debate in a letter, collectively written by Mosese Varasikete, David Toganivalu, Emosi Vuakatagane, Peniame Naqasima, Seru Naivalu and Timoci Tuivaqa, which accepted that Fiji was well on its way towards independence but also noted that “in the current state of international political thinking, we should proclaim as emphatically and unequivocally as possible our desire that in such an event we, as the indigenous race of the colony, must be granted the greatest share of political control.”³¹⁴

On 17 March 1964, the British Minister for Trusteeship Affairs at the United Nations, Cecil King, held a press conference in Suva and explained the work of the Special Committee on De-colonisation. By 27 April, the Special Committee called on United Kingdom to hold a constitutional conference on Fiji. Seeing that the United Nations was eager to proceed with the de-colonisation process,

³¹⁴Ibid, p.13.

the Indo-Fijian leaders positioned themselves so that maximum political concessions on Indo-Fijian interest could be secured. For A.D. Patel, the Indo-Fijians are and will always be a landless community in Fiji unless they lobby for land reform. Patel together with Rudranand and Krishna Reddy emphasised the 1961 Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Committee, and the Land, Mines and Survey Department Annual Reports, which confirmed that the indigenous Fijians owned 83.24 per cent of the land, while Indo-Fijians owned only 1.97 per cent with Crown owning 6.85 per cent, Europeans and Part-Europeans 5.08 per cent, Colonial Sugar Refining Company 1.92 per cent, and Banabans, Chinese and Others 0.7 per cent. A.D.Patel, by calling for immediate land reform to increase Indo-Fijian land ownership and generous lease conditions, provoked indigenous Fijian wrath. On 6 May 1964, indigenous Fijian Member of the Legislative Council Semesa Sikivou stated:

The subject of indigenous Fijian land is an explosive one. We lost much land in the past and we do not intend to lose any more land. If there are any changes to be made on land laws we, the owners, will demand consultation-the fullest consultation- and our approval at every stage.³¹⁵

Indo-Fijian leaders remained undeterred by indigenous Fijian criticisms and proceeded with their campaign for independence. Meanwhile, the colonial government's sympathy lay with indigenous Fijians and this to an extent was confirmed when on 1 March 1965, the Governor of the Colony of Fiji, Sir Derek Jakeway, on an official visit to Australia stated that "it was inconceivable that

³¹⁵Legislative Council Debates, 6 May 1964, p.97.

Britain would permit the indigenous Fijian people to be placed politically under the heel of an immigrant community."³¹⁶ The Indo-Fijian leaders were appalled by the comments of the Governor who later denied making race-based remarks on independence for the colony. From the outset, it was clear to the Indo-Fijian leaders that the colonial government and its supporters would do all in their capacity to undermine the push for independence and what was needed was an Indo-Fijian political party with a clear objective on independence. Already, the Federation under the leadership of A.D. Patel had emerged from the 1960 strikes as one of the main voice of the Indo-Fijian community, despite murmurs of dissent and opposition from other Indo-Fijian groups, particularly one led by Ayodhya Prasad.

The Federation Party

Equipped with talented lawyers, accountants and union members, A.D. Patel organised a seminal meeting on 25 April 1965 at Lautoka, where the Federation Party was officially launched. According to A.D. Patel, "the Federation Party was a national organisation whose aim is to establish a nation where there is no discrimination based on religion, race or colour. But this is not an easy thing to achieve because the bureaucratic administration wanted to keep the two races apart."³¹⁷

A.D. Patel realised that the Federation Party would face a difficult time uniting

³¹⁶The Fiji Times 19 February 1965 and 1 March 1965.

³¹⁷Pacific Review, April 28, 1965. Also see Jagriti 28 April 1965.

the races. However, Patel took on the challenge and affirmed that his party was willing to work towards changing hardened racial attitudes and beliefs. The Federation Annual General Meeting of 25 April pointed out that there were certain vested interests and organisations in Fiji, in particular The Fiji Times, the Public Relations Office and the Fiji Broadcasting Commission which have in the past deliberately published distorted news on the proposed constitutional changes, inter-racial tensions and Indo-Fijian demands for political equality in Fiji. It was resolved at the meeting that the deliberate distortions of the Federation viewpoint in the media created animosity, misunderstanding and disharmony between different ethnic communities.

The Indo-Fijian group unanimously rejected and recorded their strong protest against proposals that there should be two more indigenous Fijian Members to the Legislative Council. On land, the Federation requested that “the Government of Fiji, the Native Land Trust Board, the Legislative Council of Fiji and parties concerned take appropriate steps as soon as practicable to bring about the satisfactory solution concerning problems affecting the security of land tenure.”³¹⁸ At the Annual General Meeting A.D. Patel was elected the Party President; James Madhavan, C.A. Shah and M.T. Khan Vice-Presidents; C.A. Patel General Secretary and S.M. Koya Assistant Secretary. On 26 April 1965, A.D. Patel clarified the Federation push for a common roll. According to Patel, common roll had been successful in plural societies; the common roll would encourage political parties to organise along national lines and this

³¹⁸Resolution No. 2 passed at the Annual General Meeting of the Federation Party at Lautoka on Sunday 25 April 1965.

would in long run compel everyone else to think in terms of his country rather than of particular race, community or religion. The communal roll in contrast stood for divided loyalties, to inhibit national consciousness, and is generally identified with religious fanaticism and racial separation or economic and social privilege. The Federation stand on common roll, however, was attacked by the Europeans and the indigenous Fijians. Len Usher of The Fiji Times criticised A.D. Patel for being insensitive to the aspirations of indigenous Fijians and on 13 May 1965 Mohammed Tora³¹⁹ of the Fijian Democratic Party stated that Indo-Fijians should be pushed out of the country and that indigenous Fijians were getting fed up of being kicked around. Despite the mass criticisms of the Federation policy, the Fiji Labour Party, an urban based working class group, came in support of the common roll.

In a climate of intense debate on common roll and constitution, the Secretary of the State of the Colonies, Anthony Greenwood, invited all unofficial members of Fiji Legislative Council to attend a conference in London to discuss changes in the Constitution of Fiji with the aim of making further progress in the direction of internal self-government.

The 1965 Constitutional Conference

On 26 July 1965 a historic constitutional conference on Fiji was opened by Anthony Greenwood, who envisaged that various representatives from Fiji

³¹⁹Mohammed Tora at the Kisan Sangh Hall in Lautoka on 13 May 1965.

would agree on a collective strategy for internal self-government for the Colony under a revised constitution. In fact, the Indo-Fijian viewpoint at the conference was entirely different from the one advocated jointly by the Europeans and the indigenous Fijians, who were guided by the resolutions of the Council of Chiefs. The Great Council of Chiefs earlier in the year met on the issue of indigenous Fijian representation to the 1965 Conference and recommended that: (a) the aim of any constitutional changes should not be independence but the continuing association with Great Britain; (b) in particular, the link with the Crown should be maintained and strengthened; and Her Majesty the Queen should continue to reserve the power to amend or revoke the Constitution; and (c) Fiji should remain a British territory.

Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, the spokesperson of the indigenous Fijian community at the London Conference, advised the delegation that while indigenous Fijians desired self-government, they did not want independence. In a report published in London, it was stressed that if the indigenous Fijians insisted on standing by the Deed of Cession under which Queen Victoria promised to rule Fiji and efforts to increase the rights of Hindus and Moslems seem doom to failure.³²⁰ Also at the conference, the indigenous Fijian delegation reaffirmed that their land was given to them by God and that Queen Victoria confirmed this by assuring the Chiefs during cession that the Crown would govern the Colony of Fiji in trust. Furthermore, the indigenous Fijians rejected the demands by the Indo-Fijians for any share out of indigenous Fijian land.

³²⁰Sunday Telegraph, 25 July 1965.

The main recommendations in the Report of the Fiji Constitutional Conference in London from 25 July to 12 August were that the Legislative Council of Fiji should have a majority of unofficial Members with 36 elected Members and 4 official Members. Indigenous Fijians should have 14 seats; the Indo-Fijians 12 and the Europeans 10. That the Chinese, Rotumans and other Pacific Islanders should have the vote and that two of the 14 indigenous Fijian Members to the Legislative Council be appointed by the Great Council of Chiefs. Immediately, the recommendations of the London conference were criticised by the Federation's S.M. Koya, who was one of the proponents of the ill-fated common roll proposal which was defeated by the joint indigenous Fijian and European opposition. Under the new arrangement, voting was to continue on communal lines. The Fiji Labour Party remarked: "the London Constitutional Conference has achieved definite success in one direction- viz., creation of further racial and communal fears and suspicions, and thereby perpetuating the influence and supremacy of self-seeking vested interests. National Unity remains an elusive dream."³²¹ On 26 August 1965, an Indo-Fijian Member of the Southern Division, Andrew Deoki, agreed with the Federation view on the common roll and constitutional change. However, Ayodhya Prasad and K.S. Reddy³²² argued against the Federation and the Fiji Hindi newspaper Jagriti³²³ confirmed on 14 September that Indo-Fijians were divided on fundamental political issues.

³²¹The Fiji Labour Party's Press Statement, 18 August 1965.

³²²Nai Lalakai, 9 September 1965.

³²³Jagriti, 14 September 1965.

By December 1965, the differences at the London Conference came out in the open during the Legislative Council debates on the recommendations of the Conference. The indigenous Fijians and the Europeans reiterated their stand for the retention of communal roll, but recognised that a straight common roll was a desirable long term objective. Ratu Edward Cakobau elucidated on two items of special interest: one the right of indigenous people in their own country and second the instrument of the Deed of Cession. For Cakobau, "racial integration and political integration cannot, to my mind, be forced on any people. Integration is a delicate process and it can only thrive through good intention, understanding and friendship, and I for one will encourage it."³²⁴

On the Indo-Fijian side, the Deed of Cession was termed "Deed of surrender" by the indigenous chiefs to the Crown. The Federation argued that nowhere in the Deed there is a mention of the Great Council of Chiefs, only protection of mataqali land. Such an interpretation was seen as mischievous. For Federation leader S.M. Koya, the indigenous Fijians "honestly" believed that they had a special position in the country.

If we accept today the proposition that the indigenous Fijian community has a special position in the country, it follows, Mr. Speaker, that they should have a special position in everything else- in the recruitment for the civil service, in the armed forces and any other services. It follows that as time goes on, from within the indigenous Fijian community- and I predict this- there will be a national movement purely on communalistic

³²⁴Legislative Council Debates, 16 December 1965, p.656.

lines to say "Fiji for indigenous Fijians, Indo-Fijians and others get out."³²⁵

While Federation leaders spoke against the London Constitutional Conference, the Great Council of Chiefs in the Council resolutions of 1966 supported with enthusiasm the recommendations of the Conference. It was noted that "cognizance was taken in general to the wishes of the Fijian people as expressed in the Wakaya Letter and subsequently by our members of the Legislative Council, in particular in relation to the two seats in Legislative Council to be allocated to our Council."³²⁶ With the process of constitutional amendment almost complete, one of the leading indigenous Fijian leaders, Ratu Mara, together with the Fijian Association, launched the Alliance Party on 12 March 1966. The Alliance as the name indicated was a "three-legged stool" comprising of Indo-Fijian, indigenous Fijian and General Elector blocs. Each had its separate but inter-connected administrative structure to express communal aspirations by accepting in principle the political hegemony of indigenous Fijian chiefs. Led by a high chief, the Alliance got the support of the chiefs and a majority of indigenous Fijians and General Electors with the minority support coming from some segments of the Indo-Fijian community.

The most important person in the Alliance Party was Ratu Mara, who followed directly in the footsteps of Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna. Born in Lau in 1920, Ratu Mara was the son of Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba, the Tui Nayau. He was educated

³²⁵Legislative Council Debates, 17 December 1965, p.703.

³²⁶Resolutions of the Council, 1966, p.20.

at Marist Brothers High School, Otago University, Oxford University and the London School of Economics. Ratu Mara began his career as a District Officer and was Assistant Deputy Secretary for Fijian Affairs from 1959 to 1961. He was Commissioner Eastern from 1961 to 1964 and in 1953 he became the Member of the Legislative Council. Blessed with vast experience in politics, Mara and his colleagues went ahead and established a formal political party. The objectives of the party were to: a) promote the political, social and economic welfare of the people of Fiji; b) to promote goodwill, tolerance, understanding and harmony amongst all communities of Fiji; and c) to promote orderly progress towards internal self-government, always maintaining and strengthening Fiji's link with the Crown. Indigenous Fijians were not fully united behind Alliance and a small segment supported the National Democratic Party of Apisai Tora. This to an extent suggested that some indigenous Fijians did not support the aspirations of the Alliance and in this group, there were individuals who advocated "Fiji for indigenous Fijians". Nonetheless, in 1963, indigenous Fijians for the first time got a chance to experience the often confusing Fiji ballot.

The 1966 Elections

On 20 September 1966, the Colony of Fiji got a new constitution based on the outcome of the 1965 Constitutional Conference. From 26 September to 8 October 1966, there was a general election, held in the Colony, which was to determine the future constitutional and political developments of the country.

The electoral rolls indicated that there were 156,683 electors out of which 75,768 were Indo-Fijians, 74,575 indigenous Fijians and 6,340 General Electors.³²⁷ The Federation repeated its pro-independence stand based on a common roll franchise, and called for a greater awareness on land matters. Among its star candidates were M.T. Khan, a lawyer from Tavua; K.C. Ramrakha, another lawyer and Irene Jai Narayan who was born in Lucknow India and married an Indo-Fijian in 1954.

The 1966 election was won by the Alliance Party. According to Roderic Alley, "the elections gave Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara's Alliance Party a clear majority of 12, winning 22 of the 34 directly elected seats."³²⁸ The Federation Party captured 9 communal seats with James Madhavan, A.D.Patel, Mrs. Irene Jai Narayan, K.C. Ramrakha, C.A.Shah and R.D. Patel being in the line up of the new Legislative Council. An analysis of the support received by the Alliance Party in the communal constituencies clearly showed that indigenous Fijians were by far guided by communal sentiments. The Alliance received some 82.42% of the valid indigenous Fijian votes with 15.75% of Indo-Fijian votes and 98.23% General votes. The Federation received 65.25% of the Indo-Fijian votes and the National Democratic Party received 5.58% of the indigenous Fijian votes.

The above analysis of the voting pattern clearly illustrated that racial

³²⁷The Fiji Times, 27 September 1966.

³²⁸Roderic Alley, "Independence for Fiji: Recent Constitutional and Political Developments," **Australian Outlook**, Volume 24, No.2, 1970, p.150.

considerations and in particular traditional chiefly influence determined indigenous Fijian votes. Indo-Fijians, however, were more divided than indigenous Fijians since certain members of the Indo-Fijian community were suspicious of the Federation leaders. In a letter to The Fiji Times, R. Prasad of Nasinu stated: "I am not afraid to say that some of the Fiji born Indo-Fijians openly played into the hands of the Gujaratis (namely A.D. Patel). Previously, the Gujaratis dominated us financially, but now, thanks to the efforts of some of these irresponsible types, we are politically dominated too."³²⁹

Factions within the Indo-Fijian community undermined the efforts of the Federation Party. The anti-Federation movement, led by Ayodhya Prasad and B.D. Lakshman, emphasised that the Federation Party was essentially a marriage of convenience between Indo-Fijians of South Indian origin and Gujaratis from the Indian state of Gujarat. The Gujaratis became easy targets of anti-Federation activists because they did not serve indenture and arrived in the colony as "free migrants" in the 1920s. In retrospect, the criticisms of Federation also had their origins in the struggles between two farmers unions Kisan Sangh-led by B.D. Lakshman and Ayodhya Prasad and Maha Sangh-led by A.D. Patel and Rudranand.

Of particular interest, however, is the history of B.D. Lakshman³³⁰ who by the late 1960s had adopted an openly hostile attitude towards free migrants. Lakshman began his School teaching career in 1917 and in 1934 after

³²⁹The Fiji Times, 14 October 1966.

³³⁰The Fiji Times, 9 September 1966.

spending four years in India, organised the Indo-Fijian High School in Lautoka. In 1940, he was elected to the Legislative Council as the Indo-Fijian Member for the North-West Constituency and served again in the Council from 1959 to 1962. Lakshman organised the Fiji Kisan Sangh in 1937-1940 and was elected President in 1949. The leaders of the Fiji Kisan Sangh were generally united in their view that the best option for the Indo-Fijians was to work with the indigenous Fijians and the Europeans within a framework of political consensus. This principle was, however, contrary to those advocated by the Federation Party and its leaders, who by 1960 established themselves as a militant group, ready to force their opinion on the colonial administration.

On 1 September 1967, a Ministerial system of Government was brought into operation in Fiji. Immediately, the Federation Party members condemned the move and resigned in protest, forcing a by-election which was held in 1968. The Federation move was seen as a political stunt by indigenous Fijian Members of the Legislative Council and the Alliance Party. To further add insult to indigenous pride, the Federation members were returned to the Legislative Council with a bigger majority in their communal constituencies in 1968. According to W.F. Newton, "in 1968 the Federation Party won a landslide victory in by-elections for all the Indo-Fijian communal seats. Indigenous Fijians, almost to a man member of the Fijian Association, exploded in fury at what they considered a racial vote and an insult and a threat to themselves."³³¹ The isolated skirmishes between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians in 1968

³³¹W.F. Newton, "Indigenous Fijians, Indo-Fijians, and Independence," **The Australian Quarterly**, Volume 24, No.1, 1970, p. 34.

shook the Federation Party which forged a working relationship with Apisai Tora's National Democratic Party. The Federation leaders had miscalculated the extent to which indigenous Fijians were driven by communal sentiments. The extension of franchise in 1963 and the experience with the ballot thereafter did not translate into support for the Federation's agenda for independence and a common roll. By 1967, the impetus for de-colonisation at the United Nations had slowed down and this was not in the best interest of the Federation leaders. On 9 May 1968, Creighton Burns, who was in the Committee of 24, remarked that Fiji was ready for independence. "However, [The Age observed that] indigenous Fijian political leaders are understandably more than content to hasten slowly towards independence. They fear that premature independence could precipitate racial conflict and competition with the Indo-Fijian community."³³²

The indigenous Fijian chiefs had by 1968 sent a clear signal to the Indo-Fijians in the colony that indigenous Fijian political interest shall remain paramount and this perception was justified by the Deed of Cession. What the indigenous Fijian message meant was that chiefly leadership and its acceptance by the Indo-Fijians would be the basis for continued racial harmony in the country. Already by then, a number of chiefs were elected members of the Legislative Council. Among these were Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, Ratu Edward Cakobau, Ratu David Tonganivalu, Ratu George Cakobau, Ratu Josua Tonganivalu and Ratu William Tonganivalu. The political hegemony of the chiefs had been

³³²The Age, 9 May 1968.

consolidated by 1968 and some members of the Federation quickly pointed out that the chiefs had taken over from where the colonial government left off. One of the leading Federation members S.M. Koya accused the chiefly establishment of "divide and rule." "Koya accused Ratu Mara of being behind the agitation to divide the Indo-Fijian community on a Hindu-Muslim basis."³³³ For the Indo-Fijian community, however, the question of communal representation was settled when in 1963 a predominantly Hindu electorate elected S.M. Koya and three other Muslims to the Legislative Council. Despite this, Federation member M.T. Khan defected to the Alliance, indicating that religious factionalism within the Indo-Fijian community remained strong. With the Federation strategy of a quick independence, common roll and national unity in peril, the leader of the Party, A.D. Patel suddenly passed away in 1969. In fact, after the 1968 racial confrontation, Patel had already softened many of his hardline principles on land. One was his push for an equitable land distribution to the farmers. The "land to the tiller" concept further assisted the Alliance propaganda machinery in mobilising indigenous Fijians against the Federation. After the upheavals of 1968, Patel moved away from his confrontational-style and held a number of discussions with indigenous Fijian chiefs. Patel was told in unequivocal terms that land was a very sensitive issue for indigenous Fijians and that indigenous Fijian landownership was non-negotiable. In the middle of such discussions, Patel passed away and the mantle of Indo-Fijian leadership fell on the shoulders of S.M.Koya. However, by then, mutinous factions within the Party had already emerged. During the

³³³The Pacific Review, 10 July 1968.

Federation leadership debates, internal divisions and hostilities between party members and towards party policy surfaced. To appease these factions, Koya started to oscillate between the confrontational-style of Patel and the moderate, often soft politics of the growing party faction. R.K. Vasil observed that "it is widely believed by the Indo-Fijians in Fiji that many of the concessions subsequently made by the Federation Party under the leadership of Koya would not have been conceded by Patel."³³⁴

By 1970, it was clear that Koya was willing to work with the chiefs and had accepted the Alliance blueprint for the future political discourse between Fiji's two racial groups. Similar to 1966, the Alliance Party presented a united front during the constitutional discussions of 1970. The Federation Party, on the other hand, was divided and had undertaken little preparation prior to the talks. K.C. Ramrakha and Irene Jai Narayan openly split with the Koya faction. "However [according to Vasil], Koya was able to assert himself and get the Federation Party representatives to accept the deal offered by the Alliance. Mrs. Narayan and Ramrakha being in the minority were forced to go along with the majority."³³⁵

Indigenous Fijian chiefs agreed to provisions for non-ethnic national seats, while retaining communal representation. It was agreed that the Great Council of Chiefs in post-independence Fiji would have powers to nominate Senators

³³⁴R.K.Vasil, "Communalism and Constitution Making in Fiji," in **Pacific Affairs**, Volume 45, No. 1, 1972, p. 25.

³³⁵Ibid, p. 35.

and veto legislations insensitive to indigenous tradition and custom. Furthermore, issues such as land and common roll were to be discussed between indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian leaders after independence. The Federation had in the end submitted to the political will of the chiefs, who were leaders of the Alliance Party.

Conclusion

After the end of indenture, Indo-Fijian leaders challenged the colonial historic bloc by organising a number of anti-establishment strikes. The Indo-Fijians leaders demanded equality with Europeans and pressured the colonial administration into reserving 3 communal seats for the community. However, there were divisions within the Indo-Fijian community, arising due to hostilities between descendants of indenture and free migrants, mostly Gujaratis. Despite divisions, the post-indenture agitations formed the cultural basis for the establishment of the Indo-Fijian political bloc in the form of the anti-hegemonic Federation Party in 1960.

On the indigenous Fijian front, cultural arguments around the Deed of Cession and concerns over an increasing Indo-Fijian population, Indo-Fijian agitations against the colonial establishment and Indo-Fijian non-participation in World War II were used to cement the indigenous Fijian political bloc under the Alliance Party, which affirmed the cultural and later political hegemony of indigenous chiefs and co-opted segments of the Indo-Fijian and the European

communities within the party structure.

In the neo-Gramscian sense, it was the indigenous chiefs who were structurally positioned to provide both cultural and national leadership and they attempted to co-opt other ethnic and cultural groups by forming a political party based on the political and cultural hegemony of the chiefs. The educated chiefs that took over from the colonial administration established a chief-led historic bloc that was based on the political, ethnic and cultural hegemony of the chiefs. The indigenous Fijian community was united in their belief that the political hegemony of the chiefs was the only guarantee against Indo-Fijians encroachment on indigenous land and culture. However, the chief led historic bloc formed before independence was challenged in post-colonial Fiji by commoner indigenous nationalists in 1975, 1987 and 1999 by inter-ethnic alliances.

Similar to anti-hegemonic movements during the colonial period, there were challenges to the chief historic bloc after independence and by the late 1980s, indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians formed class alliances, leading to counter-hegemony against indigenous chiefs. These issues are discussed in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER 6

POLITICAL HEGEMONY OF THE CHIEFS

Indigenous chiefs, allied to the colonial government, laid down the institutional, cultural and ideological foundations in colonial Fiji to entrench chiefly political hegemony after independence. The new chief-led historic bloc after independence was founded on the Deed of Cession and the concept of paramountcy of indigenous Fijian interest, which was articulated and reinforced by the Great Council of Chiefs. It was a foregone conclusion by 1945 that the transfer of political power in Fiji would be from British authorities to indigenous Fijian chiefs. By then, however, a number of commoner indigenous Fijians had been co-opted into the colonial bureaucracy and these individuals, some of them allies of indigenous chiefs, would become agents for securing a new chiefly political order.

Indo-Fijians, since 1960, attempted without success to form inter-ethnic alliances with indigenous Fijians. This failed because indigenous chiefs did not share the Indo-Fijian anti-colonial sentiment and saw the colonial administration as a protector of indigenous traditions and customs against increasing Indo-Fijian population and political agitations by their leaders. In Chapter 5, I argued that both indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians formed their own cultural and political blocs with the colonial administration managing the conflicting aspirations of both these communities. However, as dictated by the Deed of Cession, indigenous chiefs established political hegemony with the consent of

the Indo-Fijian leaders, who feared indigenous nationalism and were concerned by an indigenous Fijian-dominated military that supported the political aspirations of the chiefs.

The chiefly political hegemony established in 1970 in the form of an indigenous political bloc, started to fracture, following the formation of the Fijian Nationalist Party in 1975 and by 1987, indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians formed inter-ethnic class alliances and dislodged the chiefs from power. However, the Fiji military intervened and restored political hegemony of the chiefs, resulting in another round of factionalisation of the indigenous bloc, starting in 1992 (Chapter 7).

This Chapter is organised into two sub-headings. The first sub-heading, Political Hegemony: 1970 - 1977, looks at the first seven years after independence. At independence, Fiji adopted a constitution that provided veto powers to the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC) nominees in the Senate over all legislations affecting indigenous Fijians. This was a continuation of the special position of the GCC, which was established by the colonial authorities in 1875. More importantly, between 1970 and 1977, the indigenous Fijian chiefly hegemony was consolidated by the continuation of the colonial policy of keeping Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians divided along ethnic and cultural lines. However, the state-led reinforcement of ethnic and cultural blocs, as a means to secure indigenous chiefly hegemony, caused the factionalisation of the indigenous polity, resulting in the formation of the Fijian Nationalist Party

(FNP) in 1975.

The second sub-heading, Hegemony Destabilised: 1977 - 1987, looks at the challenges to the chiefly political hegemony. The factionalisation of the indigenous polity, caused by the formation of the FNP, continued resulting in the fragmentation of the indigenous Fijian communal votes in the 1977 general election. As a consequence, the Indo-Fijian National Federation Party (NFP) won but its leaders, concerned with militant indigenous nationalism and military intervention, failed to form government. Following the intervention of Fiji's Governor General, Ratu Sir George Cakobau, the chiefly political hegemony was restored with the strengthening of ethnic and cultural hierarchies. Nevertheless, challenges to the chiefly hegemony continued with the formation of the regional based indigenous political party the Western United Front (WUF) in 1982. This party formed inter-ethnic alliance with the NFP and attempted without success to dislodge the chiefs from power in the 1982 general election. By 1985, inter-ethnic class alliances led to the formation of the Fiji Labour Party (FLP), which challenged the colonial foundations of the chiefly hegemony and the ethnicisation of politics since independence. The FLP quickly gained appeal among urban indigenous Fijians and the party successfully ousted the chiefs from political power in the 1987 general election.

There are two themes that run throughout the Chapter. The first one relates to the continuation of the colonial policy in post-independence Fiji by indigenous chiefs of keeping both indigenous and Indo-Fijian communities divided along

ethnic and cultural lines and the second theme, which reinforces the first theme, of utilising ethnicity and culture to secure political hegemony.

Political Hegemony: 1970 – 1977

Independence of Fiji

After ninety six years of British rule in 1970, Fiji became an independent state with a new constitution. Under the new constitution, Fiji became a self governing dominion within the Commonwealth. It was agreed that the Governor General was to be the representative of the Queen, and that the legislature was to consist of two houses of parliament: the Senate and a House of Representative.³³⁶ Unlike many other newly independent states, Fiji politicians decided to postpone general elections well after independence. This was a sign of cooperation between political leaders, who represented various cultural and ethnic groups in Fiji. The cooperation was premised upon an unwritten racial contract where various communities in Fiji and their leaders in particular accepted indigenous Fijian chiefly hegemony.

Ratu Mara, the high chief from Lau, became the first Prime Minister of independent Fiji. On 21 October 1970, Mara addressed the General Assembly of the United Nations. “we are all deeply conscious of the happy and peaceful

³³⁶ **Fiji: Report for the Year 1970**, (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1972), p.5.

way we have moved into independence with a united multiracial society.”³³⁷

Mara also reiterated that tolerance, harmony, and justice were the foundations of the “Pacific way”, a term that became very closely associated with the Alliance administration until the coups of 1987. The Pacific way was superficially based on multiculturalism, harmony, tolerance and justice. In reality, the Pacific way was conditional upon the acceptance by various ethnic groups in Fiji of chiefly political hegemony.

The 1970 Constitution

The 1970 Constitution was a continuation of the colonial legacy. The preponderance of communal seats of 12 each for Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians as opposed to common roll seats of 10 reflected the continuation of ethnic and cultural compartmentalisation that had its origins in colonial Fiji. Moreover, another colonial institution, the GCC, was given veto powers over all legislations affecting indigenous interest.

The constitution was, nevertheless, a compromise between the chiefly dominated Alliance party and the Indo-Fijian dominated NFP. The aim of the constitution was to provide a framework within which political conflicts could be managed. The constitution provided for a bicameral system based on the Westminster model. There was an upper house (Senate) and a lower house

³³⁷ “Text of Prime Minister’s address to the General Assembly of the United Nations on 21 October 1970,” **Fiji: Report for the Year 1970**, (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Officer, 1972), p.8.

(House of Representatives). According to Brij Lal, “elections to the House of Representatives were based on the principle of racial representation.”³³⁸ Under the 1970 Constitution, Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians were allocated 12 communal and 10 national seats each. The General Electors comprising of Europeans and Chinese were given 3 communal and 5 national seats.

27 of the 52 seats in the House of Representatives were communal seats reserved for ethnic candidates to be elected by voters registered on communal rolls. The remaining 25 seats were national cross-voting seats. Under the 1970 Constitution, each voter had four votes: one for his or her ethnic constituency and one each for the three national seats. Vote splitting did not occur as ethnic loyalty remained strong. The House of Representatives had equal number of seats for Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians. For the Indo-Fijian political leaders this was seen as a proof that they had political equality with the indigenous Fijians. However, this was not the case. According to Stephanie Lawson, the distribution of seats in the House of Representatives guaranteed political hegemony of the Alliance Party.

The Lower House therefore contained equal numbers of indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians with General Electors retaining a reduced but still disproportionately large number of seats. In one sense, this could be seen as giving the General Electors a kind of balance of power in determining and forming governments. To analyse it in these terms,

³³⁸ Brij V. Lal, “Politics since Independence: Continuity and Change, 1970-1982” in Brij V. Lal ed, **Politics in Fiji**, (North Sydney: Allen and Unwin Australia Pty Ltd, 1986), p. 76.

however, is to ignore the dynamics of the party system in Fiji. In effect, the continuing political solidarity of the General Electors with the indigenous Fijian elite meant that the Alliance Party could depend on winning all three General Elector communal seats in electoral contests (which it did in all five elections from 1972 to 1987), thus giving it an immediate advantage in electoral contests.³³⁹

The composition of the Fiji Senate under the 1970 Constitution gave considerable authority to the Great Council of Chiefs, which nominated 8 members. The Prime Minister nominated 7; the Leader of Opposition nominated 6; and the Council of Rotuma nominated 1. John Dunham Kelly, like Lawson, observed that Indo-Fijians were under-represented in both the Lower and Upper Houses.³⁴⁰ This under-representation was accepted by the Indo-Fijian leaders, who pointed to the parity of seats between Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians in the House of Representatives.

Enhanced legal powers were conferred upon the Great Council of Chiefs, which was the official guardian of indigenous Fijian custom and tradition with permanent veto powers in the Senate. Under the colonial system, chiefs did not have any legal authority to override colonial ordinances, however, in post colonial Fiji, indigenous chiefs had a greater legal constitutional authority on indigenous land. At a 1982 conference at the Brigham Young University, the

³³⁹ Stephanie Lawson, **The Failure of Democratic Politics in Fiji**, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 187.

³⁴⁰ John Dunham Kelly, "Fiji Indians and the Political Discourse in Fiji: From Pacific Romance to the Coups" **The Journal of Historical Sociology**, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1988, p. 414.

South Pacific delegation noted that Fiji was a special case when it came to the protection of indigenous land rights:

While the constitutions of other Melanesian countries adopted at independence provided for changes in colonial land legislation, Fiji's constitution was designed to make changes more difficult. It provides a permanent Melanesian veto on amendments to land legislation. Section 68 of the Constitution entrenches existing land legislation by providing that it may be amended by special absolute majorities – at least three quarters of all members of both Houses. In addition Section 68 (2) requires that any amendment 'that is a provision that affects Fijian land' also requires the support of at least six of the eight Senators appointed on the advice of the Melanesian Great Council of Chiefs.³⁴¹

The colonial concept of Indo-Fijians being deceptive, cunning and unpatriotic was used by the indigenous chiefly elite in Fiji strengthen its political position among indigenous Fijians. The Alliance Party in particular argued that rights of indigenous Fijians could only be guaranteed under chiefly hegemony.

According to Brij Lal, "the constitution has not ceased to be a controversial issue in Fijian politics. Many indigenous Fijians still appear concerned, constitutional guarantees to the contrary, that only an indigenous Fijian dominated Alliance government can protect their heritage and rights."³⁴² The political domination of the Alliance Party of Fiji was increasingly accepted by

³⁴¹ **1982 Political Conference: Evolving Political Cultures in the Pacific Islands**, (Hawaii: Brigham Young University, 1982), p. 201.

³⁴² Brij V. Lal, "Politics since Independence," p. 79.

the people of Fiji as Deryck Scarr warned that attempts to dislodge the Alliance Party from power would have consequences, especially for the Indo-Fijian community.”³⁴³ Scarr elaborated that dislodging indigenous chiefs from power could lead to violent re-assertion of chiefly hegemony.

The 1972 General Elections

The 1972 general election was the first post-independence election for Fiji. The election was a referendum on chiefly hegemony but more so, it was a test for the NFP which had agreed at independence to accept the chiefly leadership of Ratu Mara and the political leadership of the Alliance Party. But the conciliatory gestures of NFP leader Siddiq Koya were not supported by those who were allies of A.D. Patel. As a result, divisions within the party widened as the NFP failed to provide any meaningful opposition.

In the 1972 elections, the Alliance Party appealed to the communal sentiments of the indigenous Fijians while portraying itself to the Indo-Fijians as a multicultural party effectively managing the interests of the diverse community. In socio-economic matters, the Alliance adopted the policy of the colonial government with some notable modifications but without radical alteration of its capitalist base. Superficially it displayed a multiracial image but beneath, the appeal was to communal groups through their communal organisations.³⁴⁴ The

³⁴³ Deryck Scarr (ed), **Fiji: The Three legged Stool**, (London: Oxford University Press, 1983)

³⁴⁴ Ahmed Ali, “The Fiji General Election of 1972,” **The Journal of Pacific**

NFP entered the 1972 elections as divided entity. However, there were attempts by party members to restructure party policies so that it had a wider cross communal appeal. A Taukei Committee was formed to seek support from indigenous Fijians. The Committee started a campaign to inform indigenous Fijians about alienation of native land during the colonial period. Attempts at employing a political strategy of communal appeals were partially successful when nine indigenous Fijian candidates were publicly endorsed by the NFP.³⁴⁵

The NFP tried hard to establish itself as an indigenous-friendly party. At political rallies, it addressed audiences as Indo-Fijian and indigenous Fijian brothers and sisters, but the Alliance Party was far better organised and effectively utilised the village and church networks to ensure that indigenous Fijians voted solidly for the chiefly party. One Alliance strategy was based on using Indo-Fijian candidates to campaign in Indo-Fijian constituencies in vernacular. Ahmed Ali noted that in 1972, “the Alliance had able Hindi speakers in the persons of Kishore Govind, M.T. Khan and Vivekanand Sharma, who were both fluent and sensitive to local wants. By stressing government performance and promises in an idiom, particularly pleasing to the Indo-Fijians in the rural areas, they were able to prevent any swing to the NFP: rather, they were able to register a very slight gain.”³⁴⁶

The Alliance Party won 33 seats in the 52 seat parliament while the NFP

History, Vol. 8, 1973, p. 174.

³⁴⁵ Alexander Mamak, **Colors, Culture and Conflict**, (Rushcutters Bay: Permagon Press, 1978), p. 160.

³⁴⁶ Ahmed Ali, “The Fiji General Election of 1972,” p. 177.

managed to capture only 19 seats. The 1972 election firmly established the hegemony of the indigenous Fijian chiefs through democratic elections. While the election was an endorsement of the chiefs and the Alliance Party, the result highlighted the apparent lack of popular appeal of the NFP, which continued to demand for a common roll. The newly elected Prime Minister promised to appoint a Royal Commission on electoral reform and take into consideration any recommendations. However, Ratu Mara was under no such obligation and the electoral success of the Alliance strengthened the views of indigenous Fijians that communal representation and the strategic alliance with other communities were the only assurance against the rising Indo-Fijian population and political agitations of their leaders.

Nevertheless, to satisfy the concerns of the NFP and more so to project himself as a multiracial leader, Ratu Mara was instrumental in appointing a Royal Commission in 1975 to analyse and chart the future of electoral representation in Fiji. Professor Harry Street, Sir William Hart and Sir Keith Lucas led a Commission, which accepted the importance of the ethnic factor in Fijian politics and recommended the retention of communal seats. The report also suggested the removal of racial reservation for the 25 national seats.³⁴⁷ Unfortunately, the recommendations of the Commission were discarded by Ratu Mara, who saw introduction of non-race based electoral system as a threat to chiefly hegemony and to indigenous aspirations. In not implementing the recommendations of the Commission, Mara alienated the opposition and in

³⁴⁷ Brij V. Lal, "Politics since Independence, p. 78.

particular, the leader of Opposition, Siddiq Koya, who was coming under increasing factional pressure from within his party. Besides, an even more dramatic turn in Fiji politics took place within the Alliance Party which eventually shattered the party's position on multiracial democracy and the Pacific way.

The Fijian Nationalist Party

Soon after the 1972 election, an indigenous Fijian member of the Alliance Party, Sakeasi Butadroka, challenged the chiefly hegemony of Ratu Mara and the role of Indo-Fijians in the future political development of Fiji by establishing the anti-hegemonic Fijian Nationalist Party (FNP) in 1975 after breaking away from the Alliance Party. Butadroka's actions highlighted among other things the divisions within the chief-led historic bloc, in particular, hypernationalism from within the Alliance Party, which was based on a three-way unequal partnership among the indigenous Fijian chiefs, the Indo-Fijians and the Europeans.

Unlike the Tuka, the Iuveniwei, the Nawai and the Bula Tale anti-hegemonic movements, Butadroka successfully challenged the hegemonic Alliance Party in 1977 and 1987 elections. Butadroka argued that the leader of the Alliance Party, Ratu Mara, dominated the political affairs of the country and was responsible for economically marginalising indigenous Fijians by supporting wealthy Indo-Fijian businessmen.

Butadroka called for an end to chiefly dominance and repatriation of all Indo-Fijians to India. Butadroka's message was embraced by many rural indigenous

Fijians and as a result, he was successful in shifting votes away from the Alliance to the Fijian Nationalist Party in the April 1977 general election, thus forcing the defeat of the Alliance in a number of crucial indigenous Fijian communal seats.³⁴⁸

Hegemony Destabilised: 1977 – 1987

The 1977 Elections

After Butadroka left the Alliance Party, Indo-Fijian members of the Alliance faced increasing communal pressure and in February 1977, Indo-Fijians discovered that in selecting students for the foundation year programme at the University of the South Pacific, the Alliance government had without much public debate implemented a proposal of the Education Commission of 1969 to reserve 50 per cent of all government scholarships for indigenous Fijians. According to Ahmed Ali, “the result of this step in education was that some Indo-Fijian students with high performance in University Entrance exams were unable to obtain entry into University of the South Pacific’s pre-degree programmes with indigenous Fijians while lower scores entered with ease.”³⁴⁹

Indo-Fijian leaders argued that the Alliance Party’s policy on the allocation of

³⁴⁸ R.S. Milne, **Politics in Ethnically Bi Polar States**, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1981), p. 73.

³⁴⁹ Ahmed Ali, “Fiji Indian Politics” in Vijay Mishra (ed), **Rama’s Banishment: Acentenary Tribute to the Fiji Indians 1879-1979**, (Auckland: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979), p. 76.

scholarships was discriminatory. Besides discrimination, there were other issues including fears of indigenous militant nationalism and military intervention. Indigenous nationalism was temporarily managed after independence by the Indo-Fijian acceptance of the hegemony of indigenous chiefs, who continued exploiting ethnic and cultural divisions for political purposes despite publicly arguing in favour of multiculturalism and tolerance. There were also concerns, especially among Indo-Fijian leaders, of an indigenous-dominated armed forces, which could be used to re-assert chiefly hegemony if the Indo-Fijians won government.

In April 1977, the NFP managed to win a majority of seats in the House due to a split in indigenous Fijian votes caused by the FNP. The Indo-Fijians for the first time in post-colonial politics overturned the chief-led historic bloc. Despite winning the election, the NFP could not form a government due to divisions within the party. According to Ahmed Ali, for two days, NFP parliamentarians argued about whether or not to form a government. A senior member of the NFP, Jai Ram Reddy, publicly stated that there was nobody in the NFP to lead the country.³⁵⁰

In April 1977, the NFP failed to effectively challenge the political hegemony of the indigenous chiefs because there were divisions within the party and concerns in the Indo-Fijian community of military intervention and the possibility of racial violence by indigenous nationalists. These fears were compounded by

³⁵⁰ Ibid, p.79.

indecisions on the part of the NFP leadership. According to senior NFP party member Karam Ramrakha, the party tried to heal divisions within the NFP but faced obstacles from NFP Party leader, Siddiq Koya. According to a correspondence from Ramrakha on 27 September 2005:

There is anecdotal evidence that Sir **Clifford Grant and John Falvey** told Governor General (GG) [After the April 1977 election] to change his mind and appoint Ratu Mara. At 3.15 p.m. Mara was appointed. Mara merely said I obeyed my Chief. Rumours were rife that the GG on knowing of the 14-12 vote decided Koya did not have the support of the majority. Later rumours circulated that some of us had rung him to say we would not support Koya. Who had majority in House. That can't be a secret matter as anyone crossing the floor would have to do so openly. Finally Sid said first he was an Indian so GG did not appoint him...³⁵¹

With Ratu Mara re-appointed the care-taker Prime Minister of Fiji, the NFP hardened its attitude towards the Alliance Party and defeated Mara's minority government, but a month later two factions emerged from within the NFP and held separate party conventions.³⁵² The NFP became a two-bloc party. One bloc was formed around the Koya faction and the other around Ramrakha-Narayan faction and these factions became increasingly hostile towards each other with the approach of the September 1977 general elections. The Ramrakha-Narayan faction adopted flower as the symbol of its group while Koya adopted dove. According to R.S. Milne,

³⁵¹ Email correspondence from Karam Ramrakha dated 27 September 2005.

³⁵² Milne, **Politics in Ethnically Bi Polar States**, p. 74.

“after an acrimonious contest the result was that the NFP, which six months before had captured 26 seats was reduced to 15: 12 for the flower and 3 for the dove. Koya himself became the casualty of factional warfare at the hands of Jai Ram Reddy, who defeated Koya in the contest for the Lautoka seat.”³⁵³

The Alliance Party emphasised to the indigenous Fijians that disunity had cost them the government in April 1977. To the relief of the Alliance Party, Sakeasi Buatdroka was imprisoned after he was charged and found guilty of promoting racial intolerance under the Public Order Act. Indo-Fijians who had in April abandoned the Alliance were disillusioned by factional politics of the NFP and some came back to the Alliance fold. The elections of 1977 demonstrated the capability of the Alliance Party to win majority seats by exploiting communal sentiments. Moreover, it also showed that paramountcy of indigenous political interest could be preserved by the intervention of a high chief, Governor General Ratu Sir George Cakobau.

In 1977, the NFP failed to form an effective counter-hegemonic movement, because of a breakdown between its leadership and the rank and file.

Ahmed Ali stated that the flower and dove factions belied deeper divisions within the Indo-Fijian community: that of Hindus and Muslims. According to Ali, “soon the flower became a symbol of the Hindu party particularly when some its leaders began calling Indians to vote for the flower which was

³⁵³ Ibid, p. 95.

used in the worship of Hindu gods. In turn, the doves led by Koya became labelled a Muslim party, although a lot of Koya's supporters remained Hindus.³⁵⁴ The events of 1977 highlighted that there were factions and divisions within the Indo-Fijian community that had persisted since the end of indenture. After the defeat of the NFP in the September 1977 elections, the party started to rebuild itself by adopting strategies to unite the factions under the leadership of a New Zealand trained lawyer, Jai Ram Reddy:

Under Reddy's leadership, the platform of the party was broadened in an effort to increase its appeal to non Indo-Fijian voters as well as to enable former Indo-Fijian Alliance officials to join the party with little loss of political credibility.³⁵⁵

Reddy dropped the request for common roll and NFP policies on nationalisation. Reddy became a champion of free market and in the end as Brij Lal pointed out, "the NFP became a shadow of the Alliance, competing with it to win the approval and support of the business class in Fiji."³⁵⁶ The Alliance government welcomed the problems within the NFP: the more divided the NFP was, the better chances Alliance had in holding onto political power. The political hegemony of the Alliance Party and the chiefs had been firmly consolidated. Indo-Fijians feared the spread of indigenous nationalism and saw the Alliance Party as a safer alternative to the FNP. Indigenous Fijians on the other hand re-affirmed their support for chiefly

³⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 79.

³⁵⁵ Brij V. Lal, **Politics since Independence**, p. 95.

³⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 95.

political leadership and in doing so were indirectly strengthening their cultural and ethnic positions within the Fijian polity. The Alliance Party was content with these political developments but some chiefs from the western Viti Levu had not accepted the political hegemony of the Alliance and challenged Ratu Mara. This set in train another round of challenges to the chief-led historic bloc that was established before independence.

Whilst the NFP challenge to the chiefly political hegemony had largely fizzled in 1977, there was a chance that with the support of the disgruntled chiefs from the west, the anti-hegemonic movement against the Alliance could be resurrected. The chiefs of the west were particularly concerned about the dealings of the Fiji Pine Commission (FPC) and its contracts with foreign companies. High chief of the west, Ratu Osea Gavidi reinvented some of the claims of Butadroka in the lead up to the 1982 general elections. Gavidi argued that “to the western landowners, the Alliance government’s action through the FPC was another unacceptable interference in their right to utilise their resources according to their wishes.”³⁵⁷ Ratu Osea had the support of the western chiefs, who often spoke of political, economic and social alienation of the indigenous Fijians of the west and as a response to neglect by the Alliance Party, the chiefs of the west launched the Western United Front (WUF) on 17 July 1981. The NFP saw an opportunity to capitalise on the concerns of western chiefs and extended its hand in friendship.

³⁵⁷ Ibid, p.99.

The Alliance, meanwhile, continued to portray itself as a multiracial party and by 1982, prominent members of the Indo-Fijian Alliance were busy campaigning in Indo-Fijian constituencies. Before the 1982 general elections, some members of the NFP's dove faction joined the Alliance Party. Brij Lal observed that "the extent of part switching was remarkable, but what perhaps more astonishing was the apparent ease with which the switches were made, without any public loss of face or political credibility of the defectors."³⁵⁸

The 1982 General Elections

In 1982, the leader of the NFP Jai Ram Reddy and the leader of the WUF Ratu Osea Gavidi joined forces to defeat the Alliance at the polls. The WUF attracted former Alliance Party members including Joape Rokosoi and Ratu Napolioni Dawai (Tui Nadi). The party constitution called for the protection and encouragement of western unity. It argued for the protection and encouragement of political, social, business and traditional interests of its members; protection of the interests of indigenous land owners; and improvements to the lives of western Fijians.³⁵⁹ The alliance between the WUF and the NFP was a failure because it did not develop policies that cut across ethnic and cultural lines. The NFP was largely focused on its ethnic constituency whereas the WUF aimed to gain votes from indigenous Fijians

³⁵⁸ Brij V. Lal, "Current Developments in the Pacific: The Fiji General Election of 1982" **The Journal of Pacific History**, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 1983, p. 138.

³⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 131.

in western Viti Levu. The Alliance Party campaigners dismissed the NFP-WUF coalition and campaigned on economic policies and the political stability of the party. Moreover, the Alliance formed important strategic partnership with local businesses and companies.

Michael Taylor, in his analysis of Fiji's business organisations, pointed out that political patronage by the Alliance Party played an important role in the emergence and expansion of locally owned operations in Fiji. According to Taylor:

Locally owned groups in Fiji have an economic significance that far outweighs their numbers. They obviously vary greatly in size and more prominent companies in their ranks include Motibhai and Company, R.V. Patel, Punja and Sons, Tappoo Ltd, Lees Trading and G.B. Hari. They are multi-site operations that have highly centralised control and are usually family owned.³⁶⁰

Big business support for the Alliance Party became overt in the 1982 election campaign but a more troubling allegation was made in a ABC Four Corners Report, immediately before the election, which accused foreign transnational companies for interfering in Fiji politics. Moreover, the Report highlighted that the Alliance had supported such intrusion as party policy. In particular, the Four Corners Report focused on the contents of the Carroll

³⁶⁰ Michael Taylor, "Business Organisations, The Formal Sector and Development" in Michael Taylor (ed), **Fiji: Future Imperfect**, (North Sydney: Allen and Unwin Pty Ltd, 1987), p. 70.

Report, which reported not only questionable tactics by the Alliance in winning the election but also highlighted the misuse of Australian aid money for political purposes. The NFP obtained a copy of the Four Corners Report and made over 300 copies and screened it widely throughout Fiji, especially in Suva and Lautoka.³⁶¹

The Carroll Report caused a sensation in Fiji, especially in the Indo-Fijian community. The Report was prepared by Alan Carroll, an international economic and business consultant with the help of three others: Geoffrey Rice, the head of the Thailand-based company and consultant to a multinational organisation; Rosemary Gillespie, a Melbourne-based market researcher who leaked the Report to the Four Corners team; and Geoff Alan, Director of the Australian Development Association, a big business lobby.³⁶² The Alliance Party turned the adverse Carroll Report to its advantage by emphasising that it was an opposition ploy to discredit chiefly leadership and as such the party was able to secure the support of indigenous Fijians.

After winning the 1982 elections, Ratu Mara told journalist Stuart Inder that the NFP-WUF Coalition had received a sum of \$1 million to unseat him from power. Mara further accused the Indian High Commissioner to Fiji, Sonu Kochar and her husband, of being Russian agents. Mara created the myth that the opposition and in particular the Indo-Fijian leadership was a

³⁶¹ Brij Lal, "Current Developments in the Pacific", pp. 147-48.

³⁶² Ibid, p. 145.

threat to indigenous Fijians. A Royal Commission was appointed to investigate foreign interference in Fiji, and after a short inquiry, the head of the Commission, a retired New Zealand Judge, Sir John White, exonerated the opposition leaders and the Indian High Commission from any wrong doing. However, a suspicion was consciously planted in the minds of indigenous Fijians that Indo-Fijians could not be trusted and worse that their leaders may be involved with outside interests hostile to indigenous religion and culture. The Alliance Party rhetoric of Indo-Fijians being allies of the Soviet Union would be raised once again after the 1987 election and this time the target of such an accusation would be the newly formed Fiji Labour Party (FLP).

The Fiji Labour Party

The Fiji Labour Party was the first political party in Fiji that was based on inter-ethnic class collaboration between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians. The overt class characteristic of the party posed a serious challenge to the chief-led historic bloc because the party successfully provided an alternative to the political hegemony of the chiefs.

Ten years after independence, Fiji continued to have an overspecialised economy with guaranteed access to European markets under the Lome Conventions. In the 1970s recessions, Fiji remained largely shielded from the down-turn in the international market but by 1981 sluggish growth in the

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and a 30 per cent decline in the terms of trade caused national income to fall. The Alliance Party blamed global recession for the economic woes of the country,³⁶³ and became increasingly hostile towards trade unions. According to Michael Howard:

Between 1981 and 1982, the government placed a virtual freeze on new positions in the public service and many vacant posts were not filled. There was little hiring in the public sector and redundancies, sometimes on a relatively large scale, became increasingly commonplace. In particular, larger foreign owned firms initiated 'rationalisation' moves entailing laying off significant number of workers.³⁶⁴

The growing anti-union rhetoric of the Alliance government caused frustrations within the trade union movement and in the middle of 1982, a Public Service Review Team recommended restructuring the public service, which was rejected by all stakeholders. By 1984, the Alliance government went against the unions by announcing a wage freeze. Fiji's largest trade union organisation, the Fiji Trade Union Council (FTUC), condemned the actions of the Alliance and threatened a national strike. In response the Alliance promised that it would declare a national emergency and use the armed forces to provide essential services. The FTUC and the Fiji Public Service Association (FPSA) began to scope the possibility of forming a

³⁶³ Christopher Browne, **Economic Development in Seven Pacific Island Countries**, (Washington: International Monetary Fund, 1989), p. 41.

³⁶⁴ Michael C. Howard, "The Trade Union Movement in Fiji" in Michael Taylor (ed), **Fiji: Future Imperfect**, p. 114.

political party to challenge the Alliance Party in the 1987 elections.

While the FTUC and the FPSA were plotting the demise of the Alliance, the government infuriated the teachers by announcing the Volunteer Service Scheme (VSS), where graduate teachers would be employed for up to two years while they awaited appointment from the Ministry of Education. Under the VSS, the government agreed to pay a salary of \$3,000 while the committee-run schools in the rural areas would meet housing and other costs. "The government decided to move away from the former practice of automatic absorption of graduate teachers in late 1982, justifying its new policy in terms of financial restraints facing the government."³⁶⁵ The Fijian Teachers Confederation (FTC) called the VSS unprofessional, ill conceived and exploitative. Members of both the Fiji Teachers Union (FTU) and the Fijian Teachers Association (FTA) joined forces with the FPSA and the FTUC. Just like the 1959 strike, economic issues were seen cutting across race. The Minister for Education in the Alliance government, Ahmed Ali, was in particular targeted by the FTU as the unions forced the VSS issue to an arbitration hearing, which in 1985 ruled that the Scheme was unlawful.

By the middle of 1980, the unions in Fiji were increasingly politicised due to the tension with the government. However, the opposition NFP, which could have capitalised on the stand-off between the unions and the government, started to fragment after its leader Jai Ram Reddy quit the party in 1983

³⁶⁵ Brij V. Lal, "Postscript: Emergence of the Fiji Labour Party" in Brij Lal ed, **Politics in Fiji**, p. 143.

and was succeeded by the former leader Siddiq Koya. With Koya back as leader, the flower-dove divisions of the NFP resurfaced and in 1986, Koya was forced to resign and Nadi lawyer Harish Sharma took over. By then a number of prominent NFP members had either left the party or joined the Fiji Labour Party.

In 1985, the Indo-Fijian and the indigenous Fijian members of the FPSA and the FTUC joined forces to form the Fiji Labour Party (FLP). The party was led by an indigenous Fijian, Dr. Timoci Bavadra, who articulated an alternative multiethnic vision for Fiji based on the equality of all communities. After the formation of the FLP, the party turned out to be a formidable political force in Fiji within a very short period of time. Dr. Bavadra was former President of the FPSA and Assistant Director of Primary and Preventive Health.

In what was a meteoric rise of the party, FLP candidate, Bob Kumar, won the Suva City Council elections and became the mayor of Suva in 1985. Challenges to the hegemony of the chiefs in 1977 elections by both the FNP and the NFP were defeated due to strong appeals to indigenous Fijian communal sentiments but in 1985, a new counter hegemonic force had challenged chiefly leadership of the Alliance Party and for the first time, this counter-hegemonic movement was multiracial in character. The Alliance government resorted to the tactics adopted against the NFP in the 1982 elections and questioned the “left” inclination of senior members of the FLP.

Despite the obvious, the General Elector community by 1987 was divided as were many indigenous Fijians in the urban areas.

Feeling the winds of change sweeping Fiji's political landscape, indigenous Fijian chiefs started a campaign of fear. On 25 September 1986, a Senator appointed by the Great Council of Chiefs warned all races not to push the indigenous Fijians. Ratu Mara also warned politicians not to take politics into the Great Council of Chiefs meeting.³⁶⁶ The chiefs were essentially warning Indo-Fijian leaders that indigenous Fijian chiefs were the natural rulers and any attempts to oust the chiefs would cause political instability.

The 1987 General Elections

The 1987 general election was the first real test for multiracial democracy established by the 1970 Constitution. Unlike previous elections, the Alliance Party was accused of continuing with the colonial policy of divide and rule and moreover, the party was charged with looking after the privileged in the community while social conditions of the majority deteriorated. The 1987 elections also saw the consolidation of cross-cultural class collaboration that was counter-hegemonic.

The FLP negotiated with the NFP and formed a coalition to contest the 1987 elections. On 21 February 1987, the coalition launched its manifesto

³⁶⁶ The Fiji Sun, 29 August 1986.

at the Girmit Centre in Lautoka. In the manifesto, the coalition promised better prices through securing the best marketing arrangement for Fiji goods, greater milling efficiency, reduction of cane transportation costs, better roads, cheaper fertilisers, fee-free education, and improvement in teacher training.³⁶⁷ The coalition continued with its frontal attack on the Alliance arguing that corruption had become endemic in indigenous Fijian politics and promised to enact anti-corruption legislation if elected.

The coalition noted that the Alliance government had placed indigenous interest behind the greed of multinational companies. In March, a block of 1,062 acres belonging to Namoso landowners was leased to Western Mining for 21 years. The villagers were not happy with the terms of the lease, and in February 1986 approached the FLP leader, Dr. Bavadra, for assistance. In March 1986, the villagers filed a \$10 million claim against the Emperor Gold Mining Company. At the centre of the Namoso struggle was the manager of the Emperor Gold Mines, Jeffrey Reid, who was a close ally of Ratu Mara and the Alliance Party. Reid supported efforts to revive the Vatukoula branch of the Fijian Association in response to the FLP's growing influence in the area.³⁶⁸ Reid went further and accused the FLP of damaging the company's reputation. In response, the coalition charged that the Emperor Gold Mining had exploited its workers and used its political influence to cheat the landowners of their rightful entitlements. The coalition

³⁶⁷ 'Atu Bain and Tupeni Baba (eds), **Bavadra: Prime Minister, Statesman, Man of the People**, p. 87-89.

³⁶⁸ Michael C. Howard, **Mining, Politics and Development in the South Pacific**, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 32-34.

accused the Alliance of extractive corruption and singled out Ratu Mara as the wealthiest man in Fiji.

The coalition alleged that Ratu Mara had built a complex in Suva with government loan and leased it back to the Ministry of Education. Some of the other charges of corruption by the coalition were: abuse of hurricane relief fund, associations with under-world figures, fraudulent investments and deals with big businesses.³⁶⁹

The Alliance Party denied charges of corruption and promised new jobs, selective privatisation and the establishment of export processing zones. Ratu Mara and the Alliance continued to argue that policies of the coalition would destroy chiefly hegemony, threaten indigenous Fijian land, and undermine indigenous religion and tradition. The leader of the FLP, Dr. Bavadra, quickly dispelled the attacks as an elaborate invention of a party that had abused traditional authority to keep itself in power for the past 17 years. According to Victor Lal, for the Alliance the FLP symbolised an indigenous Fijian commoner challenge to the entrenched chiefly system.³⁷⁰

More importantly, the coalition by 1987 had become a powerful counter-

³⁶⁹ Stephanie Lawson, **The Failure of Democratic Politics in Fiji**, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 247; Michael C. Howard, **Race and Politics in an Island State**, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1991), pp. 214-215; R.T. Robertson and Akosita Tamanisau, **Fiji: Shattered Coups**, (Leichardt: Pluto Press, 1988), pp. 50-51.

³⁷⁰ Victor Lal, **Fiji: Coups in Paradise: Race, Politics, and Military Intervention**, (London: Zed Books, 1990), p. 179.

hegemonic force comprising multiethnic union leaders, former politicians disgruntled with race-based politics, urban middle class, working class indigenous Fijians and social activists. Helen Ware notes that in 1987 the Indo-Fijians were able to create class-based political coalitions, which gave their party political predominance through the inclusion of the poor, urban indigenous Fijians.³⁷¹ Moreover, the FLP espoused an overtly non-aligned foreign policy much to the frustration of the Alliance and the West, which were concerned about Soviet and Libyan influences in the Pacific.

The position of the political parties before the 1987 general election was as follows:

Table 1: Position of political parties at the 1987 General Election

Parties	Target audience	Left-Right
The Fiji Labour Party (FLP)	Urban workers, farmers, civil servants, small businesses	Left
The National Federation Party (NFP)	Businesses, farmers, and professional classes	Centre right
Alliance Party (AP)	Multinationals, medium and large businesses, rural indigenous Fijians and chiefs	Right
Fijian Nationalist Party (FNP)	Indigenous Fijians	Extreme right

The coalition between the FLP and the NFP represented an alliance between the left and centre parties, consisting of Indo-Fijians, General

³⁷¹ Helen Ware, Demography, Migration and Conflict in the Pacific, **Journal of Pacific Research**, Vol. 42, No. 4, 2005, pp. 435-454.

Voters and urban indigenous Fijian professional and working classes, farmers and small businesses. The coalition by 1987 had become a powerful multiethnic political bloc, which was made possible by the factionalisation of the indigenous polity, caused by the formation of the FNP and the WUF. The coalition agenda was to de-ethnicise politics by removing discrimination and clientelism of the Alliance Party.

The Alliance Party in contrast was the party of the right with its support for foreign multinationals, medium and small businesses, rural indigenous Fijians and chiefs. The Alliance continued with the colonial policy of reinforcing cultural and ethnic divisions by implementing discriminatory policies in favour of indigenous Fijians. Moreover, indigenous chiefs in the Alliance portrayed themselves as the most experienced in managing Fiji's diverse communal interests and further argued that communal harmony could only be guaranteed with the continuation of the chiefly political hegemony.

The Alliance Party's divide and rule strategy failed in 1987 and the coalition won the election by capturing 28 out of 52 seats. According to Brij Lal, a majority of the indigenous Fijians still supported the Alliance Party but what was also important to note was the fact that 24 per cent of indigenous Fijians voted for other parties, indicating that the Fijian Association was no longer regarded as the sole voice of the indigenous Fijians.³⁷² The General

³⁷² Brij V. Lal, **Power and Prejudice: the Making of the Fiji Crisis**, Wellington:

Electors, like urban indigenous Fijians, swung towards the coalition by a massive 8 per cent. The swing away from Alliance was enough to compromise the chief-led historic bloc established after independence where indigenous Fijians, General Electors and a small proportion of Indo-Fijians worked in unison to support chiefly hegemony. Fiji's three tiered sub-structure of the Alliance had been undone by the coalition counter-hegemony. In the neo-Gramscian sense, the ascendancy of the coalition was made possible by its strategic political positioning and the ability to create an alternative historic bloc within two years of the formation of the FLP.

In 1987, the indigenous Fijian urban working class and indigenous trade unions formed alliances with Indo-Fijians and in particular with the anti-establishment NFP to dislodge indigenous chiefs from power. The FLP leader was an indigenous trade unionist and many in the Indo-Fijian community argued that an indigenous Fijian-led government would guarantee against militant indigenous nationalism and military intervention, which were of concern for the community following the ethnicisation of politics by the chiefs after independence.

Claims by indigenous chiefs that only the continuation of indigenous chiefly hegemony could guarantee communal harmony caused many in the coalition to conclude that constitutionalism, multiculturalism and democracy

were just a facade to ensure the rule by the chiefs. The critical untested question, after independence, was would the indigenous chiefs accept a democratic outcome if they were defeated at the polls?

Conclusion

This Chapter showed that the political hegemony of the chiefs between 1970 and 1977 was based on the continuation of the colonial policy of keeping indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian communities divided along ethnic and cultural lines. The indigenous chiefs, who led the Alliance Party, reinforced ethnic and cultural blocs by implementing racially discriminatory policies. However, in 1975, the chief-led historic bloc faced a major challenge with the rise of indigenous Fijian nationalism, which fractured indigenous Fijian unity in the 1977 elections, providing the political opportunity for the Indo-Fijian NFP to take control of the state. However, differences within the Indo-Fijian camp, followed by indecisions and fear, allowed chiefly intervention and restoration of chiefly political hegemony.

From 1977 to 1987, there were a number of challenges to the indigenous chiefly hegemony caused primarily by the factionalisation of the indigenous polity. In 1982, a regional-based WUF formed inter-ethnic alliances with the NFP but failed to dislodge the Alliance Party from power. In 1987, chiefly political hegemony and the chief-led historic bloc were once again challenged by the FLP, which formed broad inter-ethnic class alliances with

urban indigenous Fijians and General Voters and won political power.

In response the chiefs, as noted in the next Chapter, sought assistance from an indigenous-dominated military and chiefly hegemony was restored from 1987 to 1992. However, the chief-led historic bloc that was established after the coups of 1987 started to fragment as conflict and divisions among chiefs and within the indigenous Fijian community re-surfaced.

CHAPTER 7

CHIEFLY COERCIVE HEGEMONY

As noted in Chapter 6, the colonial policy of divide and rule continued in post-independence Fiji. The indigenous chiefs in the Alliance Party argued that peace and stability could only prevail in Fiji if the cultural and the political hegemony of the chiefs continued. Indigenous chiefs argued that challenges to the chiefly hegemony from the indigenous nationalists, the National Federation Party, the Western United Front and the Fiji Labour Party were aimed at undermining indigenous culture. Such interpretations were challenged by the Fiji Labour Party, which demonstrated that the chiefs in the Alliance Party were misusing indigenous culture to entrench chiefly political domination, creating fear and anxiety in the Indo-Fijian community, implementing racially discriminatory policies and engaging in corrupt practices with local businesses and foreign investors.

By forming an alliance with the anti-hegemonic NFP, the Fiji Labour Party convinced a small percentage of urban indigenous Fijians that it was time to change the political landscape of the country. A swing of some 8 per cent of urban indigenous voters against the Alliance was enough to deliver victory to the coalition, thus overturning the colonial legacy. However, concerns remained, especially among the Indo-Fijian community, regarding the response from the military and militant indigenous nationalists to the change of government.

In May 1987, the political hegemony of the indigenous chiefs was restored by a military coup by an indigenous-dominated army under the command of Sitiveni Rabuka. Indigenous ethnicist/cultural arguments were used to undermine inter-ethnic class collaboration. A new constitution was developed and implemented to secure the political hegemony of the chiefs but competition, conflict and divisions within the chief-led historic bloc, reminiscent of the colonial and the Alliance periods, resurfaced as indigenous provinces engaged in fierce competition for political power, resulting in further factionalisation of the indigenous community. Coup leader, Sitiveni Rabuka, who was a champion of chiefly political hegemony, addressed provincial and chiefly rivalries by forming alliances with Indo-Fijian leaders and instituted constitutional reforms, which caused further divisions among the indigenous community.

After the 1987 election loss, the Alliance Party members started a destabilisation campaign against the coalition even though the Alliance Party leader, Ratu Mara, accepted his party's defeat at the polls. An indigenous Fijian nationalist Taukei Movement was launched in Vuda, the home of the FLP leader Dr. Bavadra. A massive indigenous Fijian demonstration against the coalition was organised in Suva as Taukei leaders argued that they had become a minority in their homeland and that Fiji was now a "little India" of the Pacific. The former leader of opposition and the Attorney General, Jai Ram Reddy, was singled out for continuous nationalist verbal attacks and his law office was firebombed by suspected

indigenous militants on 2 May 1987.³⁷³ The 19 Alliance members also boycotted the opening session of parliament including Taukei activists, Apisai Tora and Taneila Veitata.

Continuing with the themes of the influence of the colonial legacy in shaping post-colonial polity, the role of ethnicity/culture and military in hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony, I will, in this Chapter, look at military intervention in Fiji's politics and its aftermath from 1987 to 1992 under the sub-heading Coercive Ethnic Hegemony. Following the coup in 1987, the political hegemony of the indigenous chiefs was restored but in 1988, there was an arms scandal and divisions within the Methodist Church, which highlighted conflict and divisions within the indigenous bloc. To address the issues of factionalisation among indigenous Fijians, the indigenous chiefs, in post-coup Fiji, implemented an ethnically-weighted constitution that provided indigenous monopoly on political power and sponsored an ethnically exclusive Soqosoqo ni Vakevulewa in Taukei Party (SVT). In fact, the chiefs continued with the ethnicisation of the state, which was temporarily interrupted in 1987 by inter-ethnic alliances.

The second sub-heading of Indigenous factionalisation and Inter-Ethnic Collaboration analyses the period from 1992 to 1999. In 1992, Fiji held its first general election, since the coups of 1987, under the 1990 Constitution. Immediately following the election, there was competition for the position of

³⁷³ Michael C. Howard, **Race and Politics in an Island State**, p. 234.

Prime Minister from within the SVT party. Moreover, factionalisation within the chief-sponsored party led to the demise of the 1994 Budget and the formation of the Fijian Association Party (FAP), which promoted inter-ethnic alliances.

Realising that the post-1987 coup political order was disintegrating due to divisions and conflict among indigenous Fijians, Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka formed an alliance with the NFP and started a political process to review the 1990 Constitution. Following the implementation of a multiracial 1997 Constitution, the SVT party fractured further with the formation of the indigenous nationalist Veitokani ni Lewenivanua Vakarisito (VLV) and the Party of National Unity (PANU). Moreover, in preparation for the 1999 elections, a number of multi-ethnic/multiparty blocs were formed. The SVT party formed an indigenous-led bloc with the Indo-Fijian NFP and the General Voters. The Fiji Labour Party formed a multi-ethnic bloc by forming political alliances with the FAP and the PANU. Following the 1999 election, the FLP-led multi-ethnic bloc, similar to 1987, won political power and extended its multi-ethnic/multi-party coalition by inviting the VLV to join government.

Coercive Ethnic Hegemony

The 1987 Military Coups

On 14 May 1987, Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka and his soldiers in gas masks

raided the Fiji Parliament, abducted and incarcerated members of the coalition government.³⁷⁴ This bloodless coup was the logical consequence of the political defeat of the chief-led hegemonic bloc. Moreover, there was a re-invention of militant indigenous nationalism. In April 1987, an indigenous nationalist Taukei Movement was established to lobby for the restoration of chiefly political hegemony, following the defeat of the chief-led Alliance Party in the April 1987 general election.

The coup came as a surprise to the Indo-Fijian community because they believed that an indigenous Fijian-led multiracial government could counter indigenous nationalism. After the 1987 election, indigenous nationalists argued that Indo-Fijians dominated commerce, obtained indigenous land on generous terms from landowners and with the assistance of some indigenous Fijians were in control of the government. As a result, Indo-Fijians became targets of racial hatred and attacks.

The military coup in 1987 was inspired by the "indigenous elite," who exploited racial differences for their own political purposes.³⁷⁵ From 19-21 May 1987, the Great Council of Chiefs deliberated on the political situation in Fiji and on 20 May, the chiefs supported the military leadership of coup leader Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka and called on the military to study the 1970 Constitution and guarantee indigenous control of the government at all

³⁷⁴ House of Representatives, Daily Hansard, 14 May 1987, p. 142.

³⁷⁵ Michael C. Howard, **Race and Politics in Fiji**, p. 272.

times.³⁷⁶

In an effort to bring about political normalcy in the country, the Governor-General of Fiji, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, on 11 June 1987 laid down his plan for Fiji's return to Parliamentary democracy. Under this plan, a Constitution Review Committee was established with a view to recommend to the Governor General amendments to the 1970 Constitution that would guarantee indigenous Fijian political control. The Committee held public hearings from 6 July to 31 July, 1987 and received more than 800 written and 161 oral submissions.³⁷⁷ The Constitution Review Committee failed to reach a consensus on changes to the 1970 Constitution, following the publication of "majority" and "minority" views. Members of the majority report largely sympathised with the military coup and called for changes to the constitution, whereas members of the minority report called on the military to return to the barracks and for the restoration of the constitutional government.

Following the failure of the Constitution Review Committee, moves got underway to unite various political parties of Fiji under a Government of National Unity (GNU). After series of consultations between members of the Fiji Labour Party and the National Federation Party coalition and the Alliance Party, an agreement for on a GNU was reached at Deuba.

³⁷⁶ Great Council of Chiefs Resolutions, 21 May 1987.

³⁷⁷ Report of the Constitution Review Committee, July/August 1987, Parliamentary Paper No. 21, 1987.

However, the coup leader disagreed with the concept of the GNU and executed a second military coup on 25 September 1987.

The second military coup, unlike the one on 14 May, ousted Governor-General and gave full executive authority to the Fiji Military Forces. The fact that a commoner so easily deposed a chief was truly "un-Fijian" but a greater surprise was the support the coup leader received from the Bauan high chief, Vunivalu Ratu Sir George Cakobau.³⁷⁸ Seeing support coming from the highest traditional authority, Rabuka proceeded with his plans and abrogated the 1970 Constitution and declared Fiji a republic on 3 October 1987.³⁷⁹ By October 1987, all the chiefs of Fiji fully supported the military takeover.

On 15 October 1987, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II received official confirmation from Fiji's Governor-General of his resignation and on 16 October 1987, at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in British Columbia, Fiji's membership in the Commonwealth lapsed.

Meanwhile, the military government of Fiji imposed a complete ban on Sunday on all commercial activities and further decreed night curfew from 8:00 pm to 5:00 am. Despite the efforts by the military government to create a veneer of normalcy, the curfew and the ban on commercial activities on Sunday were seen as a calculated measure to restrict freedom of movement of mostly Indo-Fijian activists. By 12 November, 1987, the daily

³⁷⁸ Radio Fiji News, 30 September, 1987.

³⁷⁹ Fiji Gazette, Vol. 1, No. 5, 7 October 1987.

curfew was lifted and on the same day the Commander of the Fiji Military Forces Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka was promoted to the rank of Brigadier. By 18 November, the President Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau was officially extended an invitation to become the first President of the new Republic of Fiji. On 5 December 1987,³⁸⁰ Ratu Penaia was appointed the first President of Fiji and on 7 December, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara was appointed the interim Prime Minister of the military backed Government.

By the end of December 1987, the military government handed over power to a hand-picked civilian authority under the leadership of two eminent chiefs: Ratu Mara and Ratu Penaia. The coup leader had successfully restored the political hegemony of the chiefs but unlike the chiefly historic bloc under the Alliance Party from 1970 to 1987, the post-coup political hegemony of the chiefs rested on the continued support of the military.

The Fiji Arms Scandal

The civilian government that was sworn into office in December 1987 remained merely a smokescreen for the army, which returned to the forefront of Fiji's political life, following the discovery of illegal weapons on board a Fiji-bound vessel from the Middle-East at Sydney's Darling Harbour on 31 May 1988. Fiji officials were informed immediately of the arms discovery by their Australian counterparts and following the revelation, the

³⁸⁰ Address by the President of the Republic of Fiji, 5 December 1987.

Fiji armed forces organised a squad of some 20 men to search ships and containers at Fiji's port of entry.

It was disclosed by authorities in Fiji that a large quantity of arms, "enough to start a small war,"³⁸¹ had already slipped into the country. On 23 June 1988, Brigadier Sitiveni Rabuka confirmed that "several have been detained and questioned without prejudice to their political affiliation or position."³⁸² Meanwhile, the government adopted a new strategy to recover all the weapons illegally brought into the country. Under this programme, the military-backed government granted amnesty to individuals who voluntarily surrendered their weapons before 24 July 1988. Three days after the announcement of the grace period, authorities in Fiji still believed that some two-thirds of the arms were still missing.³⁸³

The April and May 1988 arms shipments to Fiji remain a mystery but there were a number of theories on the arms importation case, which was a first of its kind in Fiji and possibly influenced by the coups of 1987. According to one interpretation, Indo-Fijians were unlikely to be involved in the arms shipment because they generally lack military training to operate automatic weapons, grenades and anti-tank mines. However, Indo-Fijians may have procured the services of some in the military forces in an attempt to

³⁸¹ The Australian, 3 June 1988.

³⁸² Broadcast to the nation by the Minister for Home Affairs and the Commander of the Fiji Military Forces, Brigadier Sitiveni Rabuka, 23 June 1988.

³⁸³ The Fiji Times, June 27 1988.

overthrow the government installed by the coup leader Sitiveni Rabuka. The arms were smuggled into the country in containers marked “used machinery” and secretly distributed to key Indo-Fijian contacts around, Nadi, Lautoka and Ba. It was alleged that six highly trained former British Special Air Services (SAS) were to arrive into the country to coordinate an armed “counter-insurgency” operations from western Viti Levu but the plot was foiled by authorities in Sydney. The mercenary theory is entirely speculative but an anonymous source contacted the Melbourne Sun and claimed that he conducted reconnaissance flights with alleged mercenaries over Fiji. According to this anonymous source, he was also taken to a warehouse near Essendon airport where high-powered assault weapons were stacked for the so called “Fiji operation.”

The next scenario is based on the assumption that the plan to smuggle weapons may have been initiated by wealthy Indo-Fijian Muslims.

According to Barry Lowe, “some Muslim Fiji Indians are aligned with the right-wing Taukei Movement which Fijian intelligence officers cited as an early suspect in the arms smuggling case after it first broke last week.”³⁸⁴

The assumption that Indo-Fijians of the Muslim community were involved came from two sources. One Apisai Tora, a Muslim, was a leading member of the Taukei Movement that led the destabilisation campaign against the Bavadra government and the other was the arrest of disproportionately large number of Fiji Muslims under the Internal Security Decree (ISD)

³⁸⁴ The Australian, 8 June 1988.

during the hunt for the missing weapons.

Indo-Fijian Mohammed Kahan in an interview on the ABC's Four Corners programme insisted that concerned Indo-Fijians had asked him to arrange weapons for Fiji so that Indo-Fijians can defend themselves. Further investigations by the ABC revealed that Kahan may have been involved with an international arms dealer. The final theory on the arms shipment is focused entirely on the indigenous nationalist Taukei Movement. Australian Associated Press reported on 14 June 1988 that Australian Federal Police seized maps and documents from Hinch Television Current Affairs programme allegedly relating to a planned third coup in Fiji. "Among the materials were aerial pictures of military bases and documents which the programme said last week were supposedly part of the plan by the extremist pro-indigenous Taukei Movement to immobilise the country."³⁸⁵

According to the Taukei conspiracy theory, Mohammed Kahan was a Taukei front man with connections to the Middle East arms suppliers. The arms were to be used by the Taukei militants to mount rebellion against the interim government. In May 1988, the Taukei Movement warned that the impatience for change among indigenous Fijians could erupt into "terrible violence in the streets."³⁸⁶ Evidence on the other hand point that the taukei Movement was incapable of such financial mobilisation and furthermore, the Movement was split into two rival militant groups: Domo-i-Taukei faction

³⁸⁵ The Fiji Times, 16 June 1988.

³⁸⁶ Pacific Island Monthly, May 1988.

was led by Taniela Veitata while the Taukei Movement was led by Ratu Inoke Kubuabola. Both these factions united in condemning the arms discovery as an “Indo-Fijian conspiracy.”

In addition to the involvement of mercenaries, Indo-Fijians, members of the Taukei Movement and India were singled out by the authorities in Fiji as a possible contributor to the arms importation. It is alleged that Indo-Fijian students studying in India were to undergo a period of military training in the Indian armed forces in preparation for guerrilla warfare in Fiji. There were allegations in Australia that Indian intelligence may have been involved in recent moves to overthrow the interim government installed by Sitiveni Rabuka.³⁸⁷ The Indian Embassy rejected allegations of Indian involvement as “absolutely false and mischievous.”³⁸⁸ The idea of Indian involvement was introduced by Western governments, which silently through their embassies in Fiji supported the interim government.

With the hunt for the illegal weapons slowing down in Fiji, the interim government on 15 September 1988 released the Draft Constitution of Fiji. Among other things, the Draft Constitution defined Fiji as a Christian state and recommended special constitutional provisions for the enhancement of indigenous Fijian and Rotuman interests. Immediately following the release of the Draft Constitution, the FLP and the NFP coalition and a number of Indo-Fijian organisations condemned the proposal. The Draft Constitution

³⁸⁷ The Australian, 10 June 1988.

³⁸⁸ The Fiji Times, 11 June 1988.

essentially elevated the position of the indigenous Fijian chiefs and went further than the 1970 Constitution by proposing the fusion of state and religion.

After a general public outcry, the President, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau on 5 October 1988 appointed the Fiji Constitution Inquiry and Advisory Committee (FCIAC) to seek views from the public on the various recommendations in the draft document. The Terms of Reference of the FCIAC were to scrutinise and consider the extent of which the Draft Constitution met the present and future constitutional needs, to facilitate the widest possible debate throughout Fiji, and to report fully to cabinet. The move to institute a public hearing was simply a public relations exercise as Rabuka and the chiefs had already decided on the future constitution for Fiji. Under the new constitutional order, indigenous Fijian political paramountcy would be guaranteed along with chiefly hegemony.

Divisions in the Methodist Church

Not long after the FCIAC started holding public hearings on the Draft Constitution, a rift within the Methodist Church of Fiji came out in the open on 18 December 1988 as a radical pro-coup faction of the church organised 70 roadblocks. The church President Josateki Koroi immediately dissociated himself from the protest only to discover later that moves were afoot to unseat him. The protest started over the interim government's

decision to relax parts of the Sunday ban. Some 150 Methodist members were arrested and charged for taking part in an illegal roadblock and protest, but the internal problems continued in 1989 with dissident church members taking over church property and suspending church President Josateki Koroi.

After a series of legal battles, the divisions within the church widened and in August, 1989, the 26th Annual Conference of the Methodist Church convened with two factions holding separate conferences. With Reverend Josateki Koroi's term ending, the dissident group, led by Reverend Manasa Lasaro and Isireli Caucau, reconciled and on 23 August 1988, Isireli Caucau became the church President. By then, the radical faction of the Methodist church executed a successful coup against liberal members by exploiting nationalist sentiments unleashed by the Taukei Movement, coup leader Sitiveni Rabuka and the chiefs of Fiji in 1987. In hindsight, the struggle for power within the church revealed that the ouster of Josateki Koroi was engineered to prepare the church for political activities.

The 1990 Constitution

By the end of 1989, the Constitution Inquiry and Advisory Committee had completed its work³⁸⁹ and following the recommendations of the Great Council of Chiefs, the post-coup Constitution of Fiji was ready to be signed,

³⁸⁹ Report of the Fiji Constitution Inquiry and Advisory Committee, August, 1989.

sealed and delivered.

The 1990 Constitution provided for a 70 member House of Representatives, elected entirely along ethnic and communal lines. Indigenous Fijians were allocated 37 seats, Indo-Fijians 27, General Voters 5 and the Council of Rotuma 1. In addition, only those indigenous Fijians properly registered in an official Fijian registry, Vola ni Kawa Bula, were eligible to vote or stand for election. The new Senate consisted of 24 Senators appointed by the President on the advice of the GCC and 18 of the 24 Senators held veto powers over bills affecting indigenous interest.³⁹⁰

Meanwhile, the Great Council of Chiefs took the opportunity to form a chief-sponsored political party exclusively for indigenous Fijians. The Soqosoqo ni Vakevulewa ni Taukei (SVT) party was to uphold the political aspirations of the indigenous Fijians by ensuring that indigenous Fijians always held power in the country. The SVT was a re-packaging of the defunct chief-led Alliance Party, which was defeated in the 1987 general elections. For the chiefs, the three tiered party structure, of indigenous Fijians, Indo-Fijians and General Electors, had failed indigenous Fijians and a new exclusive ethnic approach based on traditional loyalties and custom was established.

The 1990 Constitution was promulgated by late President, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau on 25 July 1990. Immediately following the release of the new

³⁹⁰ Section 41, 1990 Constitution, Fiji Government Printer, Suva, 1990.

Constitution, the FLP and the NFP coalition condemned it and urged regional governments and the international community not to recognise the interim regime. Unfortunately, the leader of the FLP-NFP coalition, Dr. Timoci Bavadra passed away in November 1990 and his wife Adi Kuini succeeded him as the leader of the FLP. The new leadership could not keep at bay the communal forces unleashed by the new 1990 Constitution.

While the 1990 Constitution was condemned by both the NFP and the FLP, the two, more or less, failed to agree on a common strategy of protest. For the Fiji Labour Party, standing for the election under a racist constitution was tantamount to accepting racial politics. The NFP disagreed and argued that it would fight for change from within the Parliament. Another intervening factor was the growing difference between the leaders of the FLP, Mahendra Chaudhry and the NFP, Jai Ram Reddy. The dispute whether or not to contest the May 1992 elections split the FLP even further with the indigenous Fijian supporters breaking ranks and forming the New Labour Party (NLP).

With the new Constitution in operation and a general lack of unity within the FLP and NFP coalition, the moment was opportune to "unite" indigenous Fijians under a single political bloc. To the surprise of some, the coup leader Sitiveni Rabuka was elected the President of the chief-backed SVT. Meanwhile in Western Viti Levu, veteran politician and former Taukei Movement leader Apisai Tora launched the multiracial All National

Congress (ANC). Also contesting the 1992 general elections was the Fijian Nationalist United Front (FNUF), a coalition between the Fijian Nationalist Party of Sakeasi Butadroka and dissident chiefs of western Viti Levu. As anticipated, the minor indigenous Fijian parties had very little support among indigenous Fijians whereas the SVT commanded the support of influential chiefs and a majority of indigenous Fijians, who supported the party leader for his role in the military coups in 1987. In shoring up the political power of the chiefs, Rabuka, who was a commoner indigenous Fijian, had indirectly promoted himself as the “saviour” of indigenous Fijians and in doing so became an influential part of the chief-led historic bloc.

Indigenous Factionalisation and Inter-Ethnic Collaboration

The 1992 Elections

The 1992 general election was won by the chief-sponsored SVT under a constitution that entrenched communal voting. Other parties, including the NFP won 14 seats, the FLP 13, General Voters Party (GVP) 5, the FNUF 3, Soqosoqo ni Taukei ni Vanua (STV) 2 and Independent 2. There were 316,848 voters registered with 154,099 comprising of indigenous Fijians and 148,546 Indo-Fijians.

Following the 1992 elections, two candidates, Sitiveni Rabuka and Josevata Kamikamica, emerged as potential candidates for the position of Prime

Minister. The Rabuka group quickly secured the support of the GVP, the FNUF and the STV. Interestingly, however, the FLP supported Rabuka after it was agreed between the two parties that the coup leader would review the 1990 Constitution, scrap Labour Decrees, revoke the Value Added Tax, and convene machinery for an amicable settlement to leases under ALTA.

Dissent within the SVT

Not long after becoming the Prime Minister, Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka's government became embroiled in controversy. A Cabinet Minister, Apaitia Seru resigned from office, following the disclosure of a Deed of Settlement³⁹¹ between the SVT government and Suva businessman Tony Stephen, who filed a wrongful detention lawsuit against the state and was on a verge of winning when the government intervened to avoid embarrassment and to stifle potential litigations relating to detentions after the 1987 coups. The Deed was leaked to Senator Finau Tabakauoro and the opposition called for a full and an impartial inquiry.

A Commission of Inquiry³⁹² under the Chairperson of Sir Ronald Kermode was established to investigate the circumstances surrounding the million dollar Deed of Settlement. The Commission found that senior government members and Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka had engaged in unlawful

³⁹¹ High Court of Suva, Civil Action No. 34 of 1989 and Civil Action No.134 of 1991.

³⁹² The Daily Post, June 8, 1993. The Daily Post, 10 June 1993; also see The Fiji Times, 21 September 1993.

conduct. Following this disclosure, a faction from within the government criticised Prime Minister Rabuka and suggested that he step down. In fact, disquiet within the SVT ranks had started well before the 1992 elections. Interim Prime Minister Ratu Mara preferred Josevata Kamikamica to take over the leadership of the SVT because Mara wanted power to be in the hands of a bureaucrat instead of an army commander. It was alleged that Mara may have engineered a faction from within the SVT to unseat Rabuka. Despite this rampant factionalism within the SVT, the government successfully worked with the opposition NFP and on 14 September 1999 passed the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Constitution Review Commission.

Internal squabbles within the SVT intensified after the Minister for Finance, Colonel Paul Manueli tabled the 1994 Appropriation Bill on 5 November 1993. Instantly, the FLP and the NFP condemned the 1994 Budget. According to The Fiji Times, "the Budget had 'failed dismally' to meet serious problems facing the nation, lacked vision and failed to come to grips with what ailed the economy."³⁹³ Duties on canned fish, powdered milk and rice nearly doubled. As a result, some SVT members joined the opposition in their budget protest. SVT government backbencher Ratu Finau Mara, for instance, expressed concern about the unacceptable levels of deficit and Lau Parliamentarian Viliame Saulekaleka criticised the increases in fiscal duty on 45 items by 2.5 per cent. Supporting the dissident government MPs

³⁹³ The Fiji Times, 23 November 1993.

was Naitasiri MP Ilai Kuli, who publicly stated that he would vote against the Budget.³⁹⁴

Realising that some government backbenchers were against the 1994 Budget, Prime Minister Rabuka decided to force a vote by tabling the Appropriation Bill for a second reading. On 29 November 1993, the government realised it had made a political miscalculation after the Budget was defeated by 33-30 votes.³⁹⁵ Seven SVT MPs-Ilai Kuli, Ratu Emosi Vuakatagane, Ratu Serpepeli Naivalu, Ratu Viliame Dreunimismisi, Viliame Saulekaleka, Viliame Gonalevu, and Josevata Kamikamica- voted against the 1994 Budget. Also opposing the Budget was the GVP MP David Pickering. After the Budget defeat, Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka consulted the Acting President, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, and on 30 November 1993, the Acting President allowed the Rabuka government to continue as a caretaker administration until formal dissolution of Parliament on 19 January 1994.

By 3 December, dissident SVT members were expelled from the party, despite claims by dissidents that it was unconstitutional to do so. On the same day, Prime Minister Rabuka mooted the idea of a government of national unity. Speaking to Craig Skehan of the Australian Associated Press (AAP), Rabuka alluded to the option of forming a unity government with the

³⁹⁴ The Fiji Times, 25 November 1993.

³⁹⁵ The Review, December/January 1994, p.10.

NFP.³⁹⁶ By December 1993, Fiji was headed for another general election as aspiring politicians went back to their racially divided constituencies to whip up communal support. As the campaign progressed, divisions within each ethnic community became more pronounced, raising questions about the chief-sponsored SVT party and the racially-weighted 1990 constitution.

The SVT was formed to unite indigenous Fijians under a single party and the 1990 Constitution was promulgated to ensure that indigenous Fijians controlled government at all times. But rather than forging unity, the constitution fuelled divisions and dissent. While the political parties were busy preparing for the general elections, the Great Council of Chiefs met from 15-16 December 1993 to discuss among other things the root of indigenous Fijian disunity. Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka told the GCC³⁹⁷ that if indigenous Fijians were to protect and safeguard their collective future as a community, then the best guarantee was to ensure that they keep 'effective control' of the national government in perpetuity. In hindsight, there was a serious conceptual error on the part of Prime Minister Rabuka and the chiefs. If indigenous Fijians did not face political competition from Indo-Fijians, then they would, in all likelihood, compete among themselves. Worse, perhaps, an indigenous Fijian monopoly of political power caused divisions among chiefs as some chiefs supported the breakaway faction of the SVT.

³⁹⁶ The Fiji Times, 3 December 1993.

³⁹⁷ The Daily Post, 17 December, 1993.

The divisions intensified and on 15 January 1994, a new indigenous Fijian political party, the Fijian Association Party (FAP), was formed in Suva by former SVT members. The FAP was led by the former Finance Minister Josevata Kamikamica, who accused the Rabuka government of following a path of broken promises, contradictory statements, confused policies and questionable behaviour.³⁹⁸ The FAP called for an open and a fair government and set out to achieve these objectives in an ambitious election manifesto.

Prelude to the 1994 Elections

After the defeat of the 1994 budget, Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka's government continued in a caretaker capacity. In an interview with the Fiji Times Wainikiti Waqa, Acting President Ratu Mara confirmed that the legal advice was that the defeat of the budget was technically a vote of no confidence in the government. However, the Acting President further highlighted that Rabuka still had a majority in the House after securing the support of the Leader of Opposition Jai Ram Reddy.³⁹⁹ Reddy was deeply troubled by Ratu Mara's comments in the media and he protested in public that "the wrong impression had been created by Ratu Mara's statement that his support for Rabuka had stopped the Acting President from appointing an alternative Prime Minister."⁴⁰⁰ Nevertheless Reddy informed the Fiji

³⁹⁸ The Fiji Times, 17 January, 1993.

³⁹⁹ The Fiji Times, 1 December 1993.

⁴⁰⁰ The Daily Post, 4 December 1993.

public that the Acting President had shown him a letter from the FLP, which urged Ratu Mara not to dissolve the parliament.

The confusion surrounding the events of December 1993 was partly orchestrated by the Office of the President, because of his support for Kamikamica and the anti-Rabuka faction within the SVT. Realising that the Acting President was actively working against the SVT leadership, Rabuka turned to the FNUF. On 4 December 1993, Rabuka disclosed that the SVT would not contest the seats held by the nationalists, but the FNUF did not trust Rabuka and the proposal for a united front during the 1994 elections collapsed. Next, the Rabuka team approached the ANC, which requested for an introduction of a Government of National Unity, review of the racially-weighted 1990 Constitution, removal of the Great Council of Chiefs from politics, an end to the Sunday Observance Decree (imposed in 1987), and the recognition of the fourth indigenous confederacy. Hopes for a coalition with the ANC were undone when SVT spokesperson criticised the conditions of the ANC in public.

The strategy to get cooperation from indigenous nationalists and the ANC demonstrated deep divisions among indigenous Fijians. Moreover, Rabuka attempted to out flank the FAP and its chiefly supporters by intensifying the rhetoric on indigenous political paramountcy. Indo-Fijians, meanwhile, engaged in bitter intra-communal feud with Indo-Fijian leaders, Jai Ram Reddy and Mahendra Chaudhry, accusing each other of supporting

Rabuka. As the election campaign progressed, the NFP claimed that several senior Indo-Fijian civil servants and USP academics were campaigning for the FLP in Macuata and Bua. The FLP's official campaign for the 1994 elections started in Tunalia, Nadi on 15 January 1994. Senior FLP member, Krishna Datt told Indo-Fijians to be wary of rumours and false propaganda circulated by opponents. While the FLP was calling for support, the NFP reiterated that the FLP leader had betrayed the Indo-Fijian community by supporting the coup leader after the 1992 general elections.

The NFP officially launched its campaign in the Northern Division on 5 February 1994 arguing that the FLP had obtained Indo-Fijian votes through false pretences. After the 1992 elections, the Indo-Fijian community was split between the FLP and the NFP and both parties wanted indigenous Fijian leaders to provide a timeframe for the review of the 1990 Constitution, a resolution to the Agricultural Landlords and Tenants Act (ALTA), suspension of the Sunday ban, revisions to the Value Added Tax (VAT) and the Labour Decrees.

Besides divisions among Indo-Fijians, the FNUF fractured after two influential chiefs, Ratu Mosese Tuisawau and Ratu Osea Gavidi, split from the party and stood as independent candidates. In a desperate attempt to save the party, nationalist leader Sakeasi Butadroka renamed the party Fijian and Rotuman Nationalist Front (FRNF). However, by then the damage was done as indigenous Fijian support moved away from the

FRNF to the chief-sponsored SVT.

As argued before, the most significant event in December 1993 was the Great Council of Chiefs meeting. At the meeting, the chiefs for the first time quietly acknowledged that there were divisions among indigenous Fijians. Divisions within the indigenous community had the potential to undermine chiefly hegemony as was the case in 1977 and 1987. As a strategy, Rabuka highlighted that any future power sharing arrangement with Indo-Fijians would be conditional upon indigenous political hegemony.⁴⁰¹ On 5 January 1994, the SVT re-endorsed all of its sitting members who did not vote against the budget. The day before, Sir Justice Moti Tikaram ruled that SVT MP Jim Ah Koy's name remain in the indigenous Fijian register after it was removed following a petition by Kadavu candidate Akariva Nabati. The indigenous Fijian register of names (Vola ni Kawa Bula) was part of the 1990 Constitution, which provided strict interpretation of indigenous identity and the subsequent eligibility of registered applicants to stand in indigenous Fijian communal seats.

In December 1993, the President of Fiji, Ratu Penaia Ganilau passed away and the role of Presidency was assumed by Ratu Mara. Immediately, Butadroka criticised Mara for dividing indigenous Fijians and manipulating the chiefs. The vitriolic attack from Butadroka further damaged his fractious party. On 15 January 1994, the FAP was launched in Suva and about 700

⁴⁰¹ The Daily Post, 17 December 1993.

men and women, many supporters of the SVT, pledged their support for the new party. According to the leader of the FAP, “the Rabuka government had followed a path of broken promises, contradictory statements and reversal of policies and questionable behaviour.”⁴⁰² The FAP called for an open and a fair government and in its election manifesto promised to: re-establish the historic links between Fiji and the Queen, reduce crime by developing a package of economic policies to promote future sustainable growth, expand exports and encourage private sector to reduce unemployment, re-activate Poverty Alleviation Fund to help the poor and the disadvantaged and reduce taxes on all essential food items, encourage regular shipping services to outlying islands, improve social services particularly in health and education and promote skills and education to improve productivity.⁴⁰³

The 1994 Election

The most debated issue in the 1994 election campaign was the call by the FAP to remove the Great Council of Chiefs from politics. Sitiveni Rabuka reacted by arguing that the FAP would only bring chaos and instability to Fiji by undermining indigenous institutions. Rabuka argued that the indigenous chiefs and politics were inseparable and that their role was inscribed in the 1990 Constitution. At the end of the 1994 election campaign, the SVT captured all indigenous Fijian communal seats, except for Lau and Naitasiri

⁴⁰² The Fiji Times, 17 January 1994.

⁴⁰³ The Daily Post, 17 January 1994

provinces, which were behind the FAP. On the Indo-Fijian front, the NFP won 20 seats while the FLP lost support across the board, including in its traditional farming strongholds. In summary, the ruling SVT Party won 31 seats; the FAP 5; the NFP 20; the FLP 7; ANC 1; 1 Independent, and 1 from Rotuma. The FNUF was totally annihilated and the NFP registered significant voter support.

The 1994 elections brought to the surface the question of chiefly political hegemony. For nationalist activist Buatdroka, the ANC and the FAP in their own unique way questioned the influence of chiefs on political outcomes in Fiji. Ratu Mara's son Finau Mara was now with the FAP, raising speculation that the new President wanted to steer Fiji politics away from the pervasive influences of provincial and communal politics.

The divisions within indigenous Fijians following the 1992 elections highlighted that the "divide and rule" strategy, of the colonial period, continued by indigenous chiefs after independence, was unsustainable in the post-coup Fiji because the 1990 Constitution provided total indigenous Fijian monopoly on political power. As a result, Indo-Fijians became a permanent opposition in parliament while competition for power and influence increased among indigenous groups. The coups of 1987 demonstrated that a commoner indigenous Fijian, Sitiveni Rabuka, can become as popular and successful as an influential chief and as a consequence, there were moves by a number of indigenous political parties

to remove the chiefs from power to create the space for greater indigenous commoner participation in politics.

By the end of 1994, the chief-led historic bloc had started to disintegrate. Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka realised that divisions within the indigenous community were caused by the 1987 coups and the racially weighted 1990 Constitution. For indigenous Fijians prospects for social and economic mobility in post-coup Fiji lay in holding ministerial and senior government positions. But not all indigenous groups and factions could be accommodated and as a result there were tensions at indigenous grassroots and provincial levels. Rabuka tried to address indigenous divisions by forging closer ties with the NFP leader Jai Ram Reddy with hopes to change the constitution and once again provide opportunities for Indo-Fijians to compete for political power.

Towards a new Multiracial Constitution

Following the 1994 election, Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka reiterated his call for a constitutional review and appointed Senator Filipe Bole as the Special Adviser to the government.⁴⁰⁴ On 4 May, the Senate Select Committee on the Review of the Constitution was established. On 24 June 1994, Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka moved a motion in the House of

⁴⁰⁴ House of Representatives, Daily Hansard, 31 March 1994, Appendix 1, p.7.

Representatives⁴⁰⁵ to set up a Joint Select Committee for Constitution Review. The House resolved that 55 per cent of the Select Committee comprise of Fijian, Rotuman and General Elector members and 45 per cent be drawn from Indian elected members. Following massive support of the motion, the government and the opposition proceeded to nominate MPs who would serve on the Committee. On 11 August 1994, a consensus was reached when 20 members were announced by the Speaker of the House, Dr. Apenisa Kurisaqila. Unfortunately, out of the 20 members, none were from the Fijian Association Party and the All National Congress.

After the formation of the Joint Parliamentary Select Committee, there were a number of meetings between the government and the opposition after which it was agreed that there be a 12 member Commission, led preferably by an indigenous Fijian. The push for an indigenous Fijian Commissioner frustrated Indo-Fijian members, who requested a neutral appointee from overseas. While the question as to who would lead the Constitution Review Commission (CRC) remained unresolved, it was decided that the Commission ought to be further simplified. On 16 November 1994, members of the Select Committee agreed that the CRC would comprise 3 members, aided by 2 constitutional experts. On 6 February 1995, the Chairmanship issue was finally resolved and it was decided that The Right Reverend Sir Paul Reeves, Archbishop of Canterbury and the former Governor-General of New Zealand would lead the Constitution Review

⁴⁰⁵ House of Representatives, Daily Hansard, 24 June 1994, pp. 1337-1338.

Commission. Assisting him would be Indo-Fijian historian Brij Lal and former Alliance Party member, Tomasi Vakatora.

On 15 March 1995, the President of Fiji, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara through an executive warrant formally established the three-member CRC. Success on the constitution front led Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka to propose on 29 June 1995, a multiracial cabinet. Speaking at the Ba Provincial Council meeting, Rabuka elucidated that "Indians need to be represented in cabinet and government if there was to be stability in Fiji."⁴⁰⁶ Indo-Fijian leaders responded to Rabuka's remark with cautious optimism: after all, it was Rabuka who had executed the coup in 1987, elevated the position of the chiefs and the Methodist Church and promoted racial segregation.

Despite some concern from members of the Indo-Fijian community regarding the review process, the CRC started public hearings from 3 July 1995. The submissions to the Commission reflected the fears and aspirations of all the communities in Fiji. Indo-Fijian submissions, more or less, repeatedly called for multiethnic cooperation under a political system that protected indigenous Fijian interest. The Fiji Muslim League, however, broke ranks with other Indo-Fijian submissions by proposing separate seats for Muslims in a new parliament. Supporting the League was the Fiji Muslim Political Rights Movement (FMPRM), which called for 10 communal seats in

⁴⁰⁶ The Fiji Times, 30 June 1995.

the House of Representatives and 4 seats in the Senate for Muslims.⁴⁰⁷

The most authoritative voice from the Indo-Fijian side came from the joint submission of the NFP and the FLP. Both parties worked together on its submission with the assistance of Professor Yash Ghai, a constitutional expert based at the University of Hong Kong. The 1990 Constitution, according to the elected members of the Indo-Fijian community, rejected multiracialism in favour of the dominance of one race over others.

Objectively and psychologically, the condition of the Indo-Fijians deteriorated due to a political system that gave them no effective voice and influence.⁴⁰⁸ The NFP and the FLP recommended a consensual form of government based on the 20 per cent formula. Any party that won 20 per cent of the seats in Parliament shall be entitled to be represented in cabinet. The joint submission also proposed a 71 member Parliament with 31 communal seats and 40 national seats.

While the Indo-Fijian submission sought to promote consociational democracy, the indigenous Fijian views called for the strengthening of indigenous communal representation. The most important indigenous Fijian submission was from the SVT party on 10 October 1995. In the submission, the SVT stated that indigenous Fijians had never trusted Indo-Fijians and

⁴⁰⁷ The Daily Post, 13 September 1995.

⁴⁰⁸ The Submission of the National Federation Party and the Fiji Labour Party to the Constitutional Review Commission: Towards Racial Harmony and National Unity, August 1995, p.35.

that such an attitude has been shaped largely by Indo-Fijian actions and deeds: "Indian demands and aspirations for greater representation and political power have always been perceived by Fijians as an attempt by Indians to dominate Fijians politically and thus take from them the control of their land, which the Indians demanded be made available, by lease or otherwise, on longer terms and better conditions."⁴⁰⁹ The SVT further lashed out at Indo-Fijians for advocating democracy and equality, which were considered alien to indigenous Fijian custom. Finally, the SVT called for a 90-member Parliament with two-thirds or 60 of the seats reserved for indigenous Fijians and Rotumans, 1 for European, 1 Chinese, 2 Pacific Islanders, 2 Vasus, 4 Muslims and 20 Indo-Fijians.

Following the SVT submission, the Leader of Opposition, Jai Ram Reddy issued a press statement⁴¹⁰ where he questioned the motive behind such a "racially- inspired" indigenous submission. On Tuesday 10 September 1996, the eagerly awaited Constitution Review Commission (CRC) Report was tabled at a joint sitting of the Parliament. However, much to the embarrassment of the Speaker and the President, the Report was made public by the Fiji Daily Post a day earlier on 9 September. Meanwhile, the President in his address to the joint sitting thanked the Chairman of the CRC Sir Paul Reeves and his fellow Commissioners Brij Lal and Tomasi

⁴⁰⁹ Soqsoqo ni Vakevulewa ni Taukei, Respect and Understanding: Fijian Sovereignty: The Recipe for Peace, Stability and Progress. 10 October 1995, p. 62.

⁴¹⁰ The Honourable Leader of Opposition, Jai Ram Reddy, Statement on the SVT Submission, 11 October 1995, p. 2.

Vakatora for presenting a consensus Report.⁴¹¹ Following the words of encouragement from the President, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka moved in the House that the CRC Report be studied and deliberated upon by a 25-member Joint Parliamentary Select Committee on the Constitution, consisting of the following members: 9 SVT, 1 GVP, 1 GEA, 2 GCC nominees to the Senate, 1 FAP, 3 FLP and 8 NFP.

Prime Minister Rabuka wanted consensus among all political parties represented in Parliament on constitutional changes. The SVT leader knew that there were factions and dissent within his own party on the CRC recommendations and various indigenous nationalist groups labelled the review process “Indo-Fijian inspired.”

The CRC Recommendations

It is important at this point to look at the detail of 9 key CRC recommendations in the CRC publication “Towards a United Future.” From the outset, the CRC report sought to balance the conflicting aspirations of Fiji’s diverse community and in the end came up with a balanced constitutional solution for Fiji. The CRC recommendations attempted to dilute the indigenous ethnic and cultural paramountcy embedded in the 1990 Constitution by recommending broad constitutional reforms aimed at encouraging cross-cultural collaboration.

⁴¹¹ House of Representatives, Daily Hansard, 10 September, 1996, p. 1026.

1. Immigration

Under the 1990 Constitution, dual citizenship was prohibited and this was upheld by the courts in 1995 following a challenge to the eligibility of Bauan high chief Adi Samanunu Cakobau to be elected to parliament in 1994. It was discovered as a result of a lengthy court deliberation that the 1990 Constitution discriminated against women and especially those who married foreign husbands.

The CRC recommended that a foreign wife or husband should have the constitutional right to enter and reside in Fiji. It considered that citizens of another country married to a Fiji citizen shall be eligible to become Fiji citizen by way of naturalisation. Furthermore, the Commission considered that any child found in Fiji should be taken as having been born in Fiji in the absence of proof of the country of birth.⁴¹²

The CRC received a number of submissions, particularly from indigenous Fijians, which called for all indigenous Fijians registered in the Fijian register Vola ni Kawa Bula to have automatic rights to Fijian citizenship. However after careful consideration of the submissions, the Commission believed that it would be wrong on grounds of policy to provide only indigenous Fijians with automatic citizenship.

⁴¹² Constitution Review Commission Report, 1996, p. 97.

2. Bill of Rights

The CRC analysed the bill of rights in the 1990 Constitution and stated that “the present bill of rights gives predominance to the fact that a person’s rights and freedom are not absolute and the grounds on which limitations may be permitted occupy considerably more space than the expression of the rights and freedoms themselves and some times capable of curtailing them more than is necessary or justifiable.”⁴¹³ The CRC recommended a bill of rights that was judicially enforceable and shifted all restrictions and justifications of any future restrictions to a legal test – one that can be reasonably justified in a democratic society. The CRC looked at the bill of rights, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms of 1982 and a number of jurisprudence that dealt with anomalies between the Charter and Canadian laws.

3. Ethnic and Social Justice

Since the coups of 1987, the Indo-Fijian community accused indigenous Fijians of implementing discriminatory policies by providing government scholarships, loans and senior positions in the public service to indigenous Fijians only. The indigenous Fijian governments, since independence, constantly defended affirmative action policies towards the indigenous community arguing that the community lagged behind in commerce,

⁴¹³ Ibid, p. 116.

education and social development, and that only state-sponsored policies could correct these problems. The CRC concluded that there was an equally strong need for the government of Fiji to put in place programmes which reduced inequalities between different communities and further elaborated that there should be “ethnic justice” and “social justice” in Fiji.⁴¹⁴

The Commission proposed that the constitution should impose on the government of Fiji a duty to put in place affirmative action programmes not only for the benefit of indigenous Fijians and Rotumans but also for other ethnic communities and for women and for all other disadvantaged citizens or groups. While recommending such a move, the CRC called on the authorities in Fiji to repeal all discriminatory provisions of the 1990 Constitution and suggested strict guidelines and procedures for parliament in determining affirmative action policies in the future.

The Commission recommended that affirmative action programmes must be reasonable, necessary and approved by parliament. The CRC emphasized that the government of Fiji must ensure all communities “equality of access” and that all affirmative action programmes established by the parliament be guided by the “10 year review” provisions of the Sunset clause.

4. Institutions of Government

⁴¹⁴ Ibid, p. 231.

The CRC recommended that there be 46 members of the Bose Levu Vakaturaga or the Great Council of Chiefs with the powers to act as an advisory body on matters relating to the well being of the indigenous Fijian people and the nation as a whole. The CRC recommendation thus reinforced limited cultural and political hegemony of chiefs. The CRC also recommended that the GCC exercise veto powers, as in the 1970 and the 1990 Constitutions, over entrenched legislations relating to indigenous Fijians and Rotumans.

5. Indo-Fijian Council

The CRC recommended that Indo-Fijians in Fiji form a Council to represent their interest and aspirations. In fact, there never existed a central coordinating authority for the Indo-Fijians, who remained fractious and divided between the two political parties, the FLP and the NFP. However, as we shall see in the next Chapter, Indo-Fijians would come together in 2000 to organize a summit and in doing so establish a defacto Indo-Fijian Council.

6. The Office of the President

Under the 1990 Constitution, the President was appointed directly by the GCC. However, the CRC recommended that the President be elected by an Electoral College comprising members from both Houses. The Commission

believed that the Office of the President should be held by an indigenous Fijian as a symbolic recognition of the indigenous people of the country. However, in a radical change from the past, the CRC recommended that the Vice President of Fiji to be a member from a non-indigenous community. For the President to be elected, 50 per cent⁴¹⁵ support from the Electoral College was required and it was suggested that there be a President's Council comprising of 10 to 15 prominent Fiji citizens and act as a non-political think-tank on issues of national importance.

7. Multiethnic Government

The CRC recommended that government must have the support of a majority of elected members in parliament and that the Prime Minister could be from any ethnic community. As for the Senate, it was agreed that this appointed body had to be transformed into an elected entity with 14 provinces electing an equal number of representatives. All 14 provinces were to elect 2 members each with the President appointing 6 members from disadvantaged and under-represented communities and 1 member from the Province of Rotuma. The CRC recommended 45 members to be elected entirely on common roll basis with 3 each from the 15 constituencies, which as far as possible were to be ethnically heterogeneous.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid, p. 269.

The CRC felt that it should not spell out the degree of heterogeneity necessary for the constituencies but strongly believed that open seats should be multiethnic without allowing any ethnic group total dominance. To encourage multiethnic collaboration, the Commission recommended Alternative Vote (AV), a majoritarian preferential voting system used in electing members to the Australian Senate and in general elections in Nauru and Papua New Guinea.⁴¹⁶

The CRC also recommended that the voting age be lowered with a voter having three votes- one for communal seat, one for the open seat and one for the Senate. The Cabinet, according to the CRC, should not comprise of more than 15 Ministers, 5 Assistant Ministers and not more than a quarter of all Ministers from the elected Senate.

8. The Fiji Military Forces

In the middle of the CRC inquiry, a Defence Review Report was made public which argued that elements of the army had become highly politicised and were acting as security advisers for a number of government politicians. The review recommended a reduction in the size of the armed forces. As a result, in the 1996 Budget, the SVT Minister for Finance,

⁴¹⁶ Expert analysis on the AV in Fiji and the Pacific was conducted by electoral specialist: Jon Fraenkel, "The Triumph of the Non-Idealist Intellectuals: An Investigation of Fiji's 1999 Election Results," **Australian Journal of Politics and History**, Vol. 46, 2000, p. 104; also see Jon Fraenkel, "Electoral engineering in Papua New Guinea: Lessons from Fiji and elsewhere," **Pacific Economic Bulletin**, Vol. 19, 2004, p.122.

Berenado Vunibobo, made a commitment to reduce the size of the army gradually.

The CRC recommended that the Fiji military be always under ministerial control and the provisions in the 1990 Constitution that allowed military intervention in politics be repealed. It could be argued that the 1997 Constitution failed to address the future political role of the military in Fiji and as a result, the military intervened in politics in 2000 and again in 2006.

9. Accountability

The CRC recommended that special constitutional measures were needed to strengthen the ability of parliament and the courts to scrutinise executive actions. The CRC proposed an integrity code, containing general, broad standards of conduct for important office holders. The CRC believed that the Integrity Code established by an act of parliament would ensure that corruption is effectively monitored and remedied under a legislative framework.

Overall the recommendations of the CRC were balanced and aimed at preserving and protecting indigenous institutions as well as providing a framework for multiethnic democracy. However, indigenous Fijians, mainly from rural Fiji, saw the recommendation as an attempt by Indo-Fijians to usurp indigenous “sovereignty” and impose principles and practices alien to

indigenous custom. Some 8 out of 14 indigenous provinces rejected the CRC Report. With the formation of the Joint Multiparty Committee on Constitution, indigenous Fijian suspicion of the political process increased.

The Joint Parliamentary Select Committee on the Constitution

The Select Committee incorporated all political parties in Parliament, excluding those without a parliamentary presence. One such party, the Vanua Independent Party (VIP), attacked the CRC Report and burnt a copy in public. The release of the CRC Report had also caused instability within the Rabuka cabinet as some nationalist hardline Ministers held secret meetings to undermine the constitution review process. In addition to government Ministers, Apisai Tora successfully brought the two indigenous Fijian parties, the FAP and the SVT, together to discuss the Report on 19 September 1996. During the meeting, some SVT members expressed concern over Rabuka's position as Chairman of the Select Committee as dissent within the SVT party increased. As a result, the opening date of the sitting of the Select Committee was delayed to 9 October 1996 from 24 September. In the interim, the Indo-Fijian political parties held separate meetings in Nadi and on 2 October 1996 held joint discussions on a united strategy during constitutional negotiations.

A factor that influenced government opinion was the municipal elections of 28 September 1996. This election, while relatively insignificant, raised

concerns among SVT members and indigenous nationalists on future power sharing arrangements due to Indo-Fijian bloc voting. Following the election, Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka cautioned Indo-Fijians and argued that bloc voting raised concerns among indigenous Fijians. Fijian Nationalist Party leader Sakeasi Butadroka warned that the municipal elections were an early warning sign to the indigenous Fijians that Indo-Fijians could not be trusted.

The Select Committee, nevertheless, met on 9 October 1996 and again on 14 November 1996 when members agreed to a new citizenship clause for Fiji and a common name. The Commission was broken up into sub-committees, which focused on various Chapters of the CRC recommendations. From the outset, it was agreed that the deliberations of the Select Committee would be confidential, but on 28 November 1996, The Fiji Times published a report which was later found to be in breach of privilege. The argument that only a small group of elected members should deliberate on the CRC Report in secrecy was unconvincing and further heightened fears among all communities in Fiji of “closed door” deals and trade offs. A top-down process may have been politically expedient, but as it turned out indigenous Fijian sentiments were against any changes to the 1990 Constitution.

In January 1997, the constitution review process seemed all but dead when members of the ruling SVT government warned against changes to the racially

weighted 1990 Constitution. Nevertheless, moves to scuttle the process were thwarted when Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka asserted his authority in support for a consensus position. The NFP respected the spirit of the recommendations of the CRC, but refused to endorse the report in its entirety. Similarly, the FAP had reservations with parts of the CRC report, but decided to proceed with constitutional negotiations with an open mind. Only the FLP argued in favour of the CRC Report together with the General Voters and the General Electors parties.

By April 1997, the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Constitution had reached a consensus. It was agreed by all political parties in the Committee that the new constitution would have 46 communal and 25 common roll seats. Opposition leader Jai Ram Reddy played a crucial role in achieving consensus by sacrificing one Indo-Fijian seat to the General Voters. Under the new constitutional deal, the Prime Minister of Fiji could be from any ethnic group and the Senate would an appointed body.

The Constitutional Amendment Act of 1997 allowed for a multi-racial cabinet. Unfortunately not everyone in Fiji was happy with the constitutional outcome. The FLP leader, Mahendra Chaudhry, called the deal a "sell-out" and similar sentiments were expressed by indigenous Fijian nationalists. Chaudhry, in fact, launched one of the major campaigns against the constitution consensus, labeling it "a recipe for continued ethnic compartmentalisation. Following the constitution consensus, the Indo-Fijian leaders focused their attention to India

after Leader of Opposition Jai Ram Reddy informed the Government of India about the new constitutional agreement. Immediately afterwards, Chaudhry urged India to take into consideration the issue of expiring agricultural leases, criticised the constitution review process and argued that the Commonwealth Heads of Government, including India, to refuse Fiji's re-entry. Chaudhry's views alienated indigenous Fijians, who largely saw the Indo-Fijian leader's actions as anti Fijian

By the end of 1997, Fiji's communal parties were in the process of re-organising themselves so that they could have a wider multiethnic appeal. The FAP was considering forming a coalition with the FLP. The General Voters were united in their view to form a united front at the 1999 election, and goodwill between the SVT and the NFP, established during the constitution review process, resulted in negotiations for a possible coalition.

Before the 1999 election, the indigenous Fijians split further. Most significant split came from within the ruling SVT party and was due to the constitution review spearheaded by Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka, whose strategy was to undermine the growing split within his party by forming an alliance with the Indo-Fijian dominated NFP. Rabuka was convinced that he still commanded majority support among the SVT as well as within the indigenous Fijian community despite changing the racially-weighted 1990 Constitution. For Rabuka, the SVT and the NFP could form a majority political bloc and easily win the 1999 election. However, divisions within the indigenous community

were much deeper than what Rabuka initially assessed, resulting in the demise of the SVT in the 1999 election.

The 1999 Elections

Whilst the new constitution of Fiji was based on promoting multiracial parties and cross-cultural understanding, many political parties were not prepared to reform their communal agendas. Just as the chief-led historic bloc established by Rabuka after the 1987 coups had fractured in 1992 with the contest for Prime Ministership from within the SVT party and in 1994 with the formation of the FAP, a third wave of divisions and dissent started among indigenous Fijians and their chiefs following the implementation of the 1997 constitution. These divisions would undermine the chief sponsored SVT party in the 1999 elections and create once again a situation similar to the one in 1987 of inter-ethnic cooperation between Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians. In the lead up to the 1999 election, this inter-ethnic cooperation was not driven by class but more by political considerations.

As noted earlier for indigenous Fijians, economic and social mobility in post-coup Fiji were contingent upon securing ministerial and senior government positions and as such indigenous groups not only competed among each other but formed alliances with Indo-Fijian parties to maximise their chances of winning office. The political competition among indigenous Fijians in the lead-up to the 1999 election was so fierce that it divided chiefly households and

pitted chiefs against each other. In the end, by 1999, Rabuka's strategy lay in ruins as he failed to secure majority indigenous support for his party let alone establish a majority political bloc.

In 1998, the SVT split further after hardline nationalist faction in the SVT party formed the breakaway Veitokani ni Lewenivanua Vakarisito (VLV) party. There were concerns that influential members of the Methodist Church of Fiji were using the church to recruit members for the new VLV Party. The President of the Methodist Church Reverend Tomasi Kanailagi presided over the launch of the VLV in 1998 and again at the Party's election rally in Suva before the election. A small group within the church believed that politics should not be mixed with religion. Former leader of the Methodist Church, Ilaitia Tuwere (1996-1998) was a strong proponent of the idea of strict separation between church and politics. However, under the new church leadership, church members were encouraged to play an active role in politics. In fact, there were important chiefly families that supported the VLV, including the son of former President, Ratu Epeli Ganilau. Also among the chiefly line-up was Adi Koila Mara Nailatikau, who was endorsed by the Lau Provincial Council as a candidate for the 1999 elections. Other candidates, for example the former Fijian Ambassador to the United Nations and party leader, Poseci Bune, stood against the SVT's Ratu Josefa Dimuri.

While Prime Minister Rabuka prepared himself to form the next government with the support of the NFP, indigenous Fijian Nationalist Vanua Takolavu

Party (VTP) leader Sakeasi Butadroka continued to criticise the new constitution. On 6 April 1999, Butadroka stated that his party would do away with the 1997 Constitution, which was seen by nationalists as a “sell-out”. The nationalists argued that too much power was given away in the new constitution and as a result, indigenous Fijians were forced to rely on others for their economic and political advancement. The indigenous nationalists argued that eight of Fiji’s fourteen provinces had rejected the new constitution and future governments may dismantle affirmative action programs of the SVT. The hegemony of the chiefs had suffered a serious blow following the election of the chief sponsored SVT party in 1992. Indigenous Fijians within the SVT challenged the ideology behind indigenous unity and more so the leadership of Rabuka, who was seen by his dissidents as a political opportunist using indigenous rights to promote himself. Unlike the hegemony of the Alliance Party, the SVT hegemony collapsed before Rabuka got the opportunity to establish alliances with Indo-Fijians. What complicated the ascendancy of the SVT were divisions within the party since traditional and customary loyalty, a hallmark of chiefly hegemony, could not be sustained by a commoner indigenous Fijian leader.

Even though Rabuka had formed a political alliance with the NFP, the non inclusion of NFP in cabinet before the 1999 elections relegated the alliance to a status considered largely symbolic. Rabuka had the opportunity to implement without delay a Government of National Unity (GNU) he had proposed in 1993 but he succumbed to the indigenous hardliners, who abandoned him and the

SVT party by forming the VLV. Nonetheless, anti-hegemonic movements by the VLV and the FAP were weak and various members of these political parties were either hard-line nationalists or moderates who wanted to work towards a non-racial political discourse. In the neo-Gramscian sense, the hegemony of the FLP after the 1999 elections was based on a fragmented historic bloc, which disintegrated by the beginning of 2000.

The Leader of the NFP, Jai Ram Reddy, urged the voters to consider a NFP/SVT/UGP government. Reddy argued strenuously that political parties knew what people wanted, namely jobs, good income, quality education and health services, a reduction in crime and a sense of security: "But all these objectives can be realised only if investment takes place on a large scale to create jobs ... for that to happen, the investors, foreign and local, must feel confident that the Government formed after the next election is going to be supported by a majority of indigenous Fijians, Indo-Fijians and General Voters."⁴¹⁷

While Reddy was making a case for his coalition with the SVT, the SVT Minister for Finance, James Ah Koy, failed to turn up for a political debate with the FLP on economic policies on 6 May 1999. The leader of the FLP predicted that his party would win all 19 Indo-Fijian communal seats, including 16 open seats. Meanwhile, Labour's coalition partner, the Fijian Association Party held a packed rally at Raiwaqa on 5 May.

⁴¹⁷ The Fiji Times, 7 May 1999

On 8 May, more than 400,000 voters begin to go to the polls under a voting system which was a first in Fiji's history. Under the Constitution, all parties winning at least eight seats could be invited to be part of Cabinet. The election was historic because of the introduction of the preferential voting system and compulsory voting. Supervisor of Elections Walter Rigamoto stated that there were 437,195 voters on the roll, almost 100,000 more than those registered in the 1994 elections.⁴¹⁸ With a total of 304 candidates contesting 71 seats in the House of Representatives, the task of finalising the electoral roll was as arduous as setting up 755 polling stations.

Besides procedural and organisational problems, tempers flared up on 7 May after FLP organisers objected to the NFP move to erect a party shed next to its rival.⁴¹⁹ Nevertheless, the voting started in earnest on 8 May, but the first day of the poll turned out to be a nightmare for both the voters and the poll organisers. Voting in the Western Division was marred by long wait. For hours voters queued outside polling stations before they finally reached the classroom where votes were cast. Reports from some polling stations revealed that votes were still being cast at around 10 pm. At the Fiji School of Nursing polling station in Tamavua, voting concluded at 11pm. In other stations around Suva, voting hours were extended to 7.30 pm or 9 pm.⁴²⁰

Following logistical problems on Saturday, the Supervisor of Elections, Walter

⁴¹⁸ The Fiji Times, 8 May 1999

⁴¹⁹ The Fiji Daily Post, 8 May 1999

⁴²⁰ The Fiji Times, 10 May 1999

Rigamoto, conceded that there were problems and that more personnel would be hired to correct the problems. However, a bigger problem emerged after allegations surfaced on voting irregularities and possible vote rigging. By Tuesday 11 May, just about all political parties expressed deep concern over the way in which the poll was progressing. In the line of fire was the Supervisor of Elections, who was accused of being out of touch with his Returning Officers. By 12 May, it was reported that voters continued to stand for long hours to cast their votes and in many cases, voters simply could not locate their names on the electoral roll. In a surprise turn of events an Indo-Fijian voter's name appeared on an indigenous Fijian electoral roll, much to the amazement of the officials.⁴²¹ Besides that some names were missing from electoral rolls, some mixed up and not forwarded to the correct polling station, some rolls were not available on time, and worst perhaps were insufficient ballot papers and a notable lack of direction from Returning Officers and their staff. In the midst of this confusion, the Election Office remained steadfast in its decision not to extend the polling dates.

FLP candidate, Ganesh Chand wrote to the Supervisor of Elections, protesting against the state of affairs at the polling stations. To make matters worse, a presiding officer was investigated for allegedly cheating and numerous allegations were made by the Fijian Nationalist Party members over a lack of supervision of ballot boxes. Joining the Nationalists in their protest against the conduct of the election was the PANU general secretary Apisai Tora, who on

⁴²¹ The Fiji Village News, 12 May 1999

12 May described as suspicious the manner in which ballot boxes were sealed at a polling station in Lautoka. Tora claimed polling officers at Andra Sangam polling station informed polling agents on Tuesday night that the ballot boxes would not be sealed until they were taken to the Lautoka Police Station.⁴²² While the argument over the conduct of the polls heated up, Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka on 14 May predicted that his coalition would win around 38 seats. However, Rabuka conceded that preferences were stacked against him and that the SVT/NFP/UGP coalition had to do well in the first count.⁴²³ Fijilive website gave a moving summary of the polling week by observing that no one seemed to have lost in this election. Just about all political parties and candidates were celebrating.

Aftermath of the 1999 Election

The vote count started in the evening of 15 May 1999. By 16 May, it was clear that the FLP was going to win a majority of Indo-Fijian communal seats. By 17 May, the SVT was in serious trouble and so was its coalition partner, the NFP. On Tuesday 18 May 1999, the elections results were out and to the surprise of the FLP supporters; the party won 37 seats-19 Indo-Fijian Communal and 18 Open seats. The FAP won 10 seats and PANU 4. On the opposite side, the NFP was totally annihilated, but its coalition partner SVT managed to win 8 seats and the United General Party won 2. The VLV won 3 seats and the Nationalists captured 2. One seat went to Rotuma and there were five

⁴²² The Fiji Times, 13 May 1999

⁴²³ Fijilive, 14 May 1999

Independents elected.

Following the final vote count, the FLP convened a meeting, where elected members agreed to nominate Mahendra Chaudhry as the first Indo-Fijian Prime Minister of Fiji. Unfortunately, FLP's coalition partners-the FAP and the PANU-were not happy with the decision. The leader of the PANU, Apisai Tora, criticised the Indo-Fijians for bloc voting. A similar sentiment was echoed by the outgoing Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka, who tendered his resignation to His Excellency the President of Fiji on 18 May 1999. In a speech to the nation that afternoon, Rabuka expressed concern over the way in which Indo-Fijians voted for the FLP. Also lamenting over the election results was the leader of the NFP Jai Ram Reddy, who accepted the verdict of the people.

While Chaudhry started work on his new cabinet, indigenous Fijian political parties lashed out at the FLP as well as at Indo Fijians. VLV's Poseci Bune called for indigenous Fijian parties to unite. A similar call was made by the Nationalist party leader Sakeasi Butadroka. Meanwhile, the FAP advised the FLP that it wanted Adi Kuini Speed to become Prime Minister. However, the FLP reminded its coalition partners that it was agreed beforehand that the party winning the most seats would choose the position of Prime Minister. While the debate on who should be the Prime Minister waged on, Mahendra Chaudhry on 19 May 1999 at 11 am was sworn in by the President as the first Indo-Fijian Prime Minister of Fiji. Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry was a distinguished trade unionist and a founding member of the Fiji Labour Party.

Chaudhry had been elected to Parliament in the April 1987 general elections and held Finance Minister's portfolio before being deposed in a military coup on 14 May. Since then, Chaudhry had remained at the forefront of politics, constantly agitating for democratic reforms. In 1991, Chaudhry organised nation-wide strikes against the Interim-Government's Sugar Masters Award. In addition, he was instrumental in campaigning against the racist 1990 Constitution. In 1992, Chaudhry was elected as a Member of Parliament and continued to fight for social justice. Among his most notable motions were the ones on corruption and on the select committee on ALTA. In 1996, Chaudhry remained steadfast in his resolve to lobby for a full implementation of the Reeves Commission Report. In 1997, he fought hard to ensure that drought stricken Indo-Fijian farmers were forwarded loans on generous terms, and remained an overt critic of privatisation and corporatisation.

After Chaudhry was sworn in as the Prime Minister of Fiji, the FAP accepted the Fiji Labour Party's endorsement of Adi Kuini Speed and Tupeni Baba for the position of Deputy Prime Ministers of Fiji. Meanwhile reports surfaced that arsonists had targeted the Department of Lands at the Government Building on the night of 19 May. According to The Daily Post, "the fire was noticed at about 7.38 pm. But, quick action from police and the fire department helped control the blaze. Deputy Chief Fire officer Isireli Qasenivalu said they have ruled out the possibility that the fire was caused by an electric fault."⁴²⁴

⁴²⁴ The Fiji Daily Post, 21 May, 1999

By 21 May, PANU agreed to join the FLP and the FAP. Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry went a step further and invited SVT and the VLV to join in a “Government of National Unity.” Under the 1997 constitution, only those parties securing 10 per cent of total votes may be invited to join cabinet. However, Chaudhry argued that for the sake of unity and stability, parties receiving less than the required threshold should be invited as well. The VLV party considered Chaudhry’s offer and to the surprise of many agreed to join the new cabinet. The SVT party leader Sitiveni Rabuka requested four cabinet positions in the new government, including the post of Deputy Prime Minister and when his request was refused, he withdrew from further consultation with the government.

The 1999 election saw the realignment of political forces in Fiji. The PANU which was a regional based party in the west formed an alliance with the FLP to ensure that they had political representation in government. The FAP was a more urban-based political movement but was influenced by the chiefs who were disenchanted by the SVT party. The VLV also had similar political setup with dissident chiefs and supporters punishing the SVT for changing the constitution. In the 1999 election, indigenous votes were split four ways among the SVT, the FAP, the VLV and the PANU. Indo-Fijians had only two choices, the FLP and the NFP, and a majority chose the FLP for continuing the fight for political equality under the 1997 Constitution. At the end of the election, the chief-led political order since the 1987 coups had collapsed and the FLP once again formed a counter-hegemonic bloc with the support of indigenous parties

seeking a voice under the new multiethnic constitution. The indigenous ideology based on the supremacy on the hegemony of chiefs had crumbled due to divisions, conflict and rivalries among the chiefs. More importantly perhaps the outcome of the 1999 election reflected the failure of Prime Minister Rabuka's strategy of amalgamating majority indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian parties into a hegemonic political bloc. In hindsight, Rabuka's strategy further fragmented indigenous votes and deepened competition for political power within indigenous groups. With the establishment of a new political historic bloc led by the FLP, indigenous cultural divisions including divisions among chiefs would continue to intensify in the form of militarised anti-hegemonic movements after the 1999 election. These are outlined in the following Chapter.

Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have shown, under the sub-section From Political Hegemony to Coercive Hegemony, that indigenous chiefs used coercive ethnic hegemony to re-claim political power, following the electoral success of a multi-ethnic class based FLP-led coalition in the 1987 general election. The chiefs continued with the colonial policy of keeping indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians separated in rival ethnic blocs from 1987 to 1992. However, there were a number of divisions within the hegemonic bloc, following the discovery of arms in 1988 and struggles for control within the Methodist Church between moderates and extremists. The chiefs attempted to consolidate the post-1987 indigenous ethnic bloc by implementing a constitution that provided total

indigenous monopoly on political power and sponsoring a political party, the SVT, which was led by coup leader Sitiveni Rabuka.

Under the sub-section Indigenous Factionalisation and Ethnic Collaboration, I demonstrated that the ethnicisation of the polity caused factionalisation and forced Rabuka to seek inter-ethnic collaboration. Following the 1992 election, there was competition for the position of Prime Minister from within the chief-sponsored SVT party and by 1994, members of the party had formed the FAP and argued for better race relations. As a response to indigenous factionalisation, Rabuka sought assistance from Indo-Fijians, reviewed the racially-weighted 1990 Constitution and implemented an ethnically-balanced 1997 Constitution. However, a multiracial constitution caused further fragmentation of the indigenous polity, resulting in the formation of the VLV and the PANU parties before the 1999 election.

In the 1999 election, there were two political blocs: SVT/NFP/GVP and FLP/FAP/PANU. In what was a return of the 1987 political scenario, the FLP won the election and extended its inter-ethnic bloc by inviting the VLV party to be part of the government. However, indigenous nationalists refused to accept the democratic outcome under the new constitution and embarked on a destabilising campaign. These issues are discussed in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER 8

THE 2000 COUP: CHIEFLY COERCION REVISITED

Separate indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian ethnic and cultural blocs were a product of Fiji's colonial legacy that continued after independence, giving rise to militant indigenous nationalism in 1975 and 1987. With the promulgation of a racially-weighted constitution in 1990, indigenous chiefs removed Indo-Fijians from competing for political power, resulting in struggles for political hegemony within the indigenous community. To counter growing factionalisation of the indigenous polity, Prime Minister Rabuka formed an alliance with the NFP and implemented a new multiracial constitution in 1997. However, despite constitutional reforms, the two dominant communities in Fiji remained split into rival ethnic and cultural entities.

Following the election of the FLP-led coalition government, indigenous nationalists, similar to 1987, organised political protests against the new government, arguing that the government of Indo-Fijian Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry would usurp indigenous land rights and politically subordinate indigenous Fijians. With the support of the opposition SVT party, the nationalists presented a petition to the President Ratu Mara, requesting for an immediate abrogation of the multiracial 1997 Constitution and the dissolution of parliament.

Ratu Mara resisted repeated calls from nationalists and re-iterated his support

for the multiracial 1997 constitution and the rule of law. As a result, Ratu Mara, a high chief of the powerful indigenous Tovata confederacy, was accused of working with Indo-Fijians to undermine indigenous aspirations. I will demonstrate in this Chapter that the indigenous nationalists exploited provincial divisions, caused by factionalisation of indigenous politics, to undermine the constitutional government and the President of Fiji. Moreover, the nationalist putsch was supported by some influential chiefs, who caused a split in the GCC, resulting in the intensification of inter-confederacy⁴²⁵ and inter-provincial rivalries.

There are three themes that recurs through this Chapter under the sub-heading Coercive Indigenous assertions against Inter-ethnic Collaboration: ethnic and cultural divisions and conflict between Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians, struggles for political hegemony within the indigenous community, and the transformation of the military from an ethnicist entity to a resistance movement against the indigenous hegemonic bloc, established after the 2000 coup.

Coercive Indigenous Assertions Against Inter-Ethnic Collaboration

Indigenous Nationalism Revival

The period of inter-ethnic political cooperation that began in 1999 between an Indo-Fijian Prime Minister and his indigenous Fijian coalition partners-the FAP,

⁴²⁵ Fiji is divided into three indigenous confederacies: Tovata, Kubuna and Burebasaga.

the PANU and the VLV-did not hold. The PANU founder, Apisai Tora, resigned from the party, after accusing Prime Minister Chaudhry of being insensitive to indigenous Fijians. Next, the FAP split into two rival factions. There were also moves by the opposition SVT party to form a united indigenous Fijian front against the FLP-led coalition. Indigenous Fijian nationalists argued, as they had in 1987, that coalition policies would destroy the indigenous Fijian community by undermining land rights. Among the coalition's contentious policies included the Land Use Commission (LUC), sale of mahogany, transfer of Crown Schedule A and B land to original indigenous landowners, changes to the 1997 constitution, and most volatile of all, a successor legislation to the Agricultural Landlords and Tenant Act (ALTA).⁴²⁶

In March 2000, unification talks between the VLV Party and the opposition SVT Party were suspended. Party President and Tui Noco, Ratu Josaia Rayawa, stated that the suspension was to allow for the healing process to take place, rather than shutting out overtures from the SVT altogether.⁴²⁷ Talks have been ongoing between the two parties following the SVT's decision on indigenous Fijian unity. However, attempts at unification had not gone according to plan, since there were members in the VLV who supported the government of Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry. The leader of opposition, Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, continued to argue that the Chaudhry government had alienated indigenous Fijians and unduly threatened their land through the proposed Land Use

⁴²⁶ "Fiji Coup Supplement: May Newsletter 2000," Te Karere Ipurangi, 21 June 2000.

⁴²⁷ Fijilive, 2 March, 2000.

Commission (LUC).

On 3 March 2000, opposition spokesperson, Ema Drauvesi, accused Prime Minister Chaudhry of interfering with the rights and traditions of indigenous Fijians. In a press statement, Drauvesi stated that: "Mr Chaudhry's had lied to Keiyasi villagers that his government would never interfere with the rights of indigenous Fijians and that his action was insulting and must be condemned in the strongest term."⁴²⁸ Furthermore, Druavesi highlighted that "the government's 2000 budget gave Indo-Fijian cane farmers \$20 million for all leases expiring under ALTA (\$28,000 per farmer) and yet there was not a single cent allocated to indigenous Fijian landowners, including landowners of Keiyasi Village whose lands were leased out to Indian tenants." ⁴²⁹

The Government labeled opposition claims as "scaremongering" but by 8 March, another potential volatile situation developed between the government and the opposition after Chaudhry disclosed his intention to send a delegation of indigenous Fijian chiefs under Senator Afzal Khan to Malaysia to have a look at the land use practice. Opposition MP Simione Kaitani condemned the decision as a "ploy", aimed at showing Malaysians that the government had the support of indigenous Fijians and Muslims in Fiji. Contributing to the growing criticism of the government was indigenous chief Tui Namosi, who argued that the land use concept was an insult to indigenous Fijians.

⁴²⁸ Fijilive, 3 March, 2000.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

Besides issues surrounding the Land use Commission, the Peoples' Coalition Government awarded a multi-million dollar mahogany contract to the Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC).⁴³⁰ Under the arrangement, the CDC would set up a company with landowners to ship the timber to an off-shore buyer. However, indigenous landowners argued that they had not been consulted and as a result, they felt cheated. Joining the debate on the sale of mahogany was the Native Land Trust Board (NLTB), which criticised the government of not consulting them on the mahogany deal with the CDC. Mahogany forests in Fiji stand on land owned by the indigenous provinces of Cakaudrove, Bua, Serua and Tailevu. Most forests are in Serua.⁴³¹ On 25 March 2000, it was revealed that the government owed land rent to 10 mahogany forest landowning units in the Western Division and that the highest amount was owed to the 12 landowning units in Baravi.⁴³²

In April of 2000, the militant Fijian Taukei Movement was revived by Apisai Tora, who played a leading role in the destabilisation of both the Bavadra and Chaudhry governments. Various indigenous Fijian nationalist groups banded together and held mass demonstrations in Suva. During a nationalist protest march on 19 May 2000, a small group of armed men invaded Parliament and incapacitated the government.⁴³³ Stockpiles of weapons were removed from the Fiji Military Forces armoury and the national Parliament became the scene

⁴³⁰ The Fiji Times, 21 March, 2000.

⁴³¹ Fijilive, 21 March, 2000.

⁴³² The Fiji Times 25 March, 2000.

⁴³³ Fijilive, 19 May 2000. Also see "coup leader's address to the nation," The Sydney Morning Herald, 19 May 2000.

of a bloody siege, which lasted for 56 days.

Before the takeover, Fiji was rife with rumours that the military would once again overthrow the government and as a result, the Minister for Home Affairs refused an application by indigenous Fijian nationalists to hold a demonstration in Suva on 19 May. However, after security briefings from the police, the decision was reversed. The events of 19 May allowed indigenous nationalist elements within the indigenous Fijian community to use ethnic divisions to engineer their way into political power. By the end of the siege at Parliament, hundreds of Indo-Fijians, living in rural areas, had been forced to flee racial violence. A "band aid" solution was imposed in the form of a military-led interim government as various indigenous Fijians continued with the nationalist mantra: "we support the cause but not the method." Fiji's Great Council of Chiefs lay divided between pro-Mara and anti-Mara factions and was unable to provide a clear solution or direction to the nation. Worse perhaps was the institutional fragility created by divisions within the army and the police. The leaders of the interim government adopted a policy of "appeasement" by quickly formulating and implementing a "blueprint on supremacy," similar to the one imposed by the interim government after the 1987 coups. But the "solution" imposed by the indigenous Fijian leaders only strengthened the resolve of the extreme nationalist elements in the indigenous community to continue with the campaign of political instability. As the 2000 crisis continued, it became obvious that the coup was no longer about indigenous Fijian rights, but inter-chiefly struggles for political power.

The events of 19 May 2000 allowed old players to take new forms and a detailed look at the political history of 19 May allows one to appreciate the level of cultural division within the indigenous Fijian community and how indigenous Fijian chiefs in particular formed an anti-hegemonic movement to oust Lauan chief Ratu Mara from office. The following sub-section looks at the events of 19 May 2000 in detail and traces the militarisation of indigenous divisions.

The Events of 19 May 2000

The events of 19 May 2000 highlight that there were deep internal divisions amongst indigenous Fijians and to mask this, the armed indigenous nationalists exploited racial divisions, prompting the intervention of the military.

On 19 May 2000, armed indigenous Fijian gunmen stormed Fiji's Parliament⁴³⁴ and held the Government of Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry hostage for 56 days.⁴³⁵ As the news of the coup spread, foreign media attempted to make sense of the political chaos unfolding in Fiji. Communication lines were down for most part of Friday 19 May as people tried to understand the background of the coup leader, George Speight, who was indicted on fraud in Fiji on foreign exchange violations. An Australian Permanent Resident, George Speight, with the support of opposition and a unit of the Fiji Military Forces, executed an armed coup. It was alleged that the coup leaders had rear-guard strategy to

⁴³⁴ The Sydney Morning Herald, 20 May 2000; Fijilive, 19 May 2000.

⁴³⁵ For an inside view of the 2000 takeover see: Michael Field, Tupeni Baba, & Ulunaisi Nabobo-Baba, **Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup**, (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2005).

oust President Ratu Mara, who had earlier rejected nationalist petitions to suspend the government and the multiracial 1997 Constitution.

In the evening of 19 May, the President of Fiji, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, issued a statement denouncing the illegal takeover and imposed a dusk to dawn curfew. Two battalions of soldiers were dispatched to downtown Suva to maintain law and order. Meanwhile, the Chairman of the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC), Sitiveni Rabuka, volunteered to resolve the political crisis and held discussions with the coup leader, George Speight. Rabuka's quick response as a negotiator raised suspicion on his motive, because he was responsible for forming the Counter Revolutionary Warfare Unit (CRWU) which along with nationalist extremists was inside parliament with guns.

On the night of 20 May, rumours surfaced that Prime Minister Chaudhry was beaten by his armed captors and forced to sign a resignation letter. It was also reported that Chaudhry's son, Rajendra Chaudhry, was beaten and threatened along with other Indo-Fijian Ministers. At 5:00 am on Sunday 21 May, ten junior Ministers were released and among them were Assistant Minister for Information Lekh Ram Vayeshnoi, who confirmed that the Prime Minister was beaten by armed men. The stalemate continued on Sunday as family members of the MPs were allowed to bring clothes and food.

In a media interview, coup leader, George Speight, made it clear that he was willing to go all the way and execute the hostages if he was forced to abandon

his objectives. Negotiations with both Rabuka and the President's aide Joseph Browne were going nowhere and the President of Fiji issued a statement in the afternoon, confirming that the coup leaders had plans to kill their captors.⁴³⁶

This statement was refuted by George Speight, who defiantly blamed the President for prolonging the crisis. Meanwhile, Ratu Mara in a Presidential decree banned foreign media from conducting interviews with the coup leader. A divided and an ineffective Fiji Police Force erected roadblocks around the Parliamentary complex. However, the Presidential directive to seal off the complex altogether was ignored by senior army officials and Police.

Restrictions on media were quickly eased on 23 May and journalists were once again back interviewing George Speight, who continued to emphasise that the rights of indigenous Fijians were trampled upon for the last 100 years and held the Chaudhry government directly responsible.

As the standoff continued, the coup makers became very edgy and in one incident, the militant members put a gun on Chaudhry's head and threatened immediate execution, after rumours that some soldiers had attempted to storm the premises. The official structures of Government had broken down and traditional influences were exerted behind the scene to end the siege.

Moreover, the chiefs who supported the nationalist putsch⁴³⁷ wanted to create a situation where the President had no choice but to hand over authority to the

⁴³⁶ The Advertiser, 22 May 2000.

⁴³⁷ A number of chiefs were nominated by George Speight to serve in his civilian government. Among the chiefs were Rewa MP Timoci Silatolu and Cakudrove chiefs Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu and Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure; see Fijilive, 19 May 2000.

military, which was bitterly divided along provincial lines. President Mara had gone down the path before with Rabuka in 1987 but this time he was getting conflicting information from the army and following in the foot step of his predecessor Ratu Penaia, President Mara issued an amnesty to the coup conspirators conditional upon their recognition of the constitution and the elected government. These concessions by the President were rejected by George Speight, who continued to claim that he was the "Prime Minister" of Fiji.

On 22 May, the Taukei Movement withdrew support for the Speight group and in the afternoon of that day, President Ratu Mara cast a doubt on the future of the coalition government, after revealing that he would put alternative scenarios to the Great Council of Chiefs. On Tuesday 23 May, the Great Council of Chiefs convened an emergency meeting, where the hostage situation was discussed at length. At the meeting, a number of chiefs supported the Speight coup while some chiefs from the west continued to support the constitutional government of Mahendra Chaudhry and President Ratu Mara.

Divisions among Chiefs

With the chiefs divided and Ratu Mara's own daughter Adi Koila Mara held hostage, the coup makers became more aggressive and attempted without success to plunge the whole of the country into anarchy on 22 May 2000. Since the legislative arm of Government was incapacitated, it was important that the Great Council of Chiefs spoke with a single voice and in no uncertain term

denounced the illegal takeover. However with some indigenous chiefs involved in the takeover,⁴³⁸ unity was impossible as divisions surfaced among Fiji's three powerful confederacies: Tovata, Burebasaga and Kubuna.

On 23 May, the chiefs deliberated on the political crisis created by the armed takeover and pledged unanimous support for the President. The show of support by the chiefs was suspect because privately some of the chiefs supported the George Speight group. At night, Speight expressed concern over the decision of the chiefs but remained defiant, insisting that Fiji's President and the 1997 Constitution had to go. The coup leader also demanded full amnesty to all involved in the overthrow of the government. On 25 May 2000, a stalemate was setting in as indigenous Fijians backed by their chiefs from villages around Suva convened to offer their support to the coup leader. Meanwhile, the Great Council of Chiefs agreed to dismiss the Chaudhry government, set up an interim administration for three years, and look into ways of changing the 1997 Constitution. After getting almost all his demands, Speight remained defiant. A delegation from the Great Council of Chiefs met with Speight on 26 May to resolve outstanding issues but the situation reached flash point on Saturday 27 May when a group of Speight supporters stormed a military camp near the parliament and attempted to wrestle weapons away from soldiers. During the skirmish, two soldiers and a journalist were injured. Soon afterwards, the soldiers retreated and the mob looted and uprooted the army camp.

⁴³⁸ Roderic Alley, "The Coup Crisis in Fiji," **Australian Journal of Political Science**, Vol. 35, No. 3, 2001, p. 515.

Tensions remained high throughout Saturday and in the afternoon, the President of Fiji confirmed that he had relieved Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry on grounds that he was incapable of carrying out his duties. An interim Prime Minister was appointed, but the political situation deteriorated further on Sunday 28 May 2000 following a day of prayer. In the afternoon, Fiji TV analysed key players behind the coup and focused on George Speight who was portrayed as having no notable record on championing indigenous rights. Political analyst, Jone Dakuvula, highlighted the provincial forces behind the illegal takeover and this infuriated Speight and his supporters at the parliament. A group of 200 men went and ransacked Fiji Television and shot and killed an indigenous Fijian policeman. The mob also went to the President's residence and fired shots in order to intimidate him.

On 29 May, the President summoned the commander of the Fiji Military Forces, Frank Banimarama, as Suva City was sealed off by the army after continued rumours that Speight supporters planned another wave of attacks. After careful consultation, the President stepped aside in the evening and allowed the Fiji Military Forces Commander, Frank Bainimarama, to assume executive authority and declare martial law. Army check points were established throughout Suva and a 24-hour curfew was imposed. According to the military brief to the President, there were reports of a possible assassination attempt on the life of the President and as a result, it was assessed that the military assume executive authority. Negotiations started on 30 May 2000 between representatives of the Fiji Military Forces and George Speight as the military

tightened its grip on the city. As a result, five Speight supporters were arrested for violating the curfew. On the negotiating table, there were a number of issues including the appointment Council of Advisers, amnesty for the hijackers and the abrogation of the 1997 Constitution.

To appease the coup leader, the army agreed to an amnesty for Speight and his henchmen and in the afternoon, the 1997 Constitution was revoked by a military decree. A compromise candidate for the position of interim Prime Minister was chosen. Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, a former army commander and the son-in-law of the President, was nominated by the military. In the evening of Tuesday 30 May, Speight and his gang were promised immunity from prosecution. However, the whole scene came to a standstill on 31 May when the rebel leader changed his mind and refused to accept Nailatikau. Speight and his group realised quickly that their initial strategy to hijack the government, unite indigenous Fijians against an Indo-Fijian Prime Minister and force the President into submission had failed. The next step was to target anti-Speight indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians. As a consequence, Speight supporters hijacked seven taxis and harassed Indo-Fijians. Order was restored quickly but rumours of a protest march scared businesses mostly in Suva. On Thursday 1 June, negotiations once again started between George Speight and the army and the appointment of an interim-Prime Minister was put on hold. Even though the army was in charge, some 50 Speight supporters attacked and ransacked a police post at Nasese, near Suva and in the incident, two police officers were injured.

In the evening of Friday 2 June, Speight supporters went on a rampage once again, targeting homes in and around the parliamentary complex. However, this time, the army engaged Speight supporters shooting one in the leg and arresting others. The talks between the army and Speight continued on 3 June but collapsed after Speight accused the army of negotiating in bad faith. Speight now had a new set of demands. He wanted total amnesty to all his gunmen and supporters, his nominee to be appointed as the President of Fiji by the GCC, and the army to return to the barracks. Speight's new demands highlighted the internal struggle for power among indigenous groups. The coup leaders, mostly from the Kubuna confederacy, with the support of their provincial chiefs wanted Ratu Mara to resign. However, the chiefs from Tovata and Burebasaga confederacies continued to support the President causing divisions and conflict between indigenous provinces.

Meanwhile in the Western part of Viti Levu, some 500 people gathered at Veseisei village in Lautoka to denounce Speight and his group as chiefs from the west agreed to sever ties with the rest of Fiji. Both indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijian farmers were united in their stand not to harvest cane until the crisis was over. Similar sentiments were expressed by the Fiji Trades Union Congress (FTUC). By 4 June, reports surfaced that Indo-Fijians in eastern part of Viti Levu were terrorised by Speight supporters. Many had their homes raided, burnt and looted. Some had to flee and seek refuge in the nearby villages. While the harassment and intimidation continued, Speight agreed to release four women hostages, including the daughter of President Ratu Mara.

However, the women decided to stay with the rest of their colleagues.

On Monday 5 June, the army laid down its condition to the rebel leader and suggested that the armed group release all hostages, surrender all arms and allow the military to bring stability before convening a meeting of the Great Council of Chiefs. Negotiations between the army and George Speight took a new turn when Fiji Military Forces Commander personally met with the rebel leader to resolve outstanding differences. On the evening of 1 June, it was agreed that an interim Military-Civilian Government would be established with Speight and his men playing an influential role. However, this deal had to be further discussed by the Great Council of Chiefs. By then, reports surfaced that chiefs from western Viti Levu didn't want anything to do with the Speight group and threatened secession. Unfortunately, the chiefs of western Fiji had traditional ties with their compatriots from Kubuna and Tovata and as before the proposal to split the west from the rest of Fiji failed.

By 5 June, the talks between George Speight and the army collapsed and on 7 and 8 June, western chiefs met at Nadi's Mocambo Hotel and agreed to form a fourth confederacy with its own Council of Chiefs. It also endorsed the setting-up of an independent state for the Western provinces. As a result, 6 representatives were selected at the meeting to work on the creation of the legal and constitutional framework of the new state.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁹ Clarification of the statements regarding the outcome of the meeting of the western region chiefs, Mocambo Hotel, Nadi, 6-7 June 2000.

On 8 June, the Fiji Military Forces took out a press release⁴⁴⁰ correcting comments made by George Speight earlier that the members of the army supporting the coup were all regular officers. According to the military the soldiers inside the parliament had resigned from the army prior to the coup. Metsulame Mua had resigned after the 1987 coup, Tevita Bukarau had resigned in 1999, the security leader at the Parliament Ilisoni Ligairi was discharged in December 1999, brother of the Police Commissioner Joseva Savua resigned in June 2000, and Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure was posted as a Reserve Officer on 1 January 1994.

As the Speight group continued to hold MPs inside the Parliament, the actions of the NLTB came into focus, following the distribution of a "Deed of Sovereignty" document in which the Board pledged to surrender the administration of native land to the Speight government. The disclosure of the Deed led to speculations that various government departments supported the Speight putsch.

The international community was concerned about the political situation in Fiji. On Friday 16 June, the Commonwealth Delegation was given assurances by the army that none of George Speight supporters would be in the interim government. On 15 June, the delegation was briefed by the commander of the RFMF that the country would return to democracy within two years. With the

⁴⁴⁰ "RFMF corrects Speight on officer's status, Fiji Government Press Release, 8 June 2000.

Commonwealth delegation heading home, the army increased its pressure on the FTUC, which was coordinating sanctions.

Army spokesperson, Filipo Tarakinikini, held discussions with the union to avert the destruction of the garment industry. Despite a skilful public relations exercise by the Fiji Military Forces, the inability of the army to contain the Speight group reflected badly on the military leadership and reinforced Indo-Fijian fears that the Fiji military was an ethnic army incapable of ensuring national security. The general atmosphere of lawlessness became apparent on Monday 19 June when four soldiers, in a revenge attack, took over a suburban police station.

While political posturing between the army and the Speight group continued in the background, Indo-Fijians continued to leave the country for fear of racial attacks from indigenous nationalists. In June 2000, the military and the Speight group finally reached an agreement. On Saturday 24 June, an agreement known as the "Muanikau Accord" was scheduled to be signed at 11:00 am at Tui Vuda's residence. However, the Speight group came up with additional demands at the last minute and effectively sabotaged the process.

On Sunday 25 June 2000, four women members of Fiji's parliament, held hostage for 37 days, were released in the early hours of the morning by the George Speight group. Those released included cabinet ministers Adi Koila Nailatikau, Lavenia Padarath, Marieta Rigamoto and former backbencher

Akanisi Koroitamana.

Racial attacks on Indo-Fijians

The armed indigenous nationalists in parliament had created a situation that forced the President to hand over executive authority to the military but in doing so indigenous divisions widened further. The next phase of the armed nationalist takeover was to attack Indo-Fijians and blame the community for the economic problems of the indigenous community. The indigenous ethnicist argument on racial exclusion was re-invented following the events of 19 May 2000. With the hostage crisis well into its second month, reports surfaced that a number of Indo-Fijian families in rural Fiji were attacked and had their live-stock stolen.⁴⁴¹

On 12 June, terrified Indo-Fijians were evacuated from their homes, following relentless attacks by indigenous Fijian thugs, sympathetic to George Speight. Some 130 mostly well-off Indo-Fijian farmers from Muaniweni were forced to hide in nearby jungle and caught the "freedom bus" to escape endless waves of racial attacks.⁴⁴² According to journalist Phil Thornton, "the villagers of Muaniweni had enough. Since Fiji rebel leader George Speight's armed coup, masked men have terrorised them, battered them, stolen their possessions, killed farm animals and trashed their homes. Helped by donations from a Suva-

⁴⁴¹ "Racist thugs terrorise village," The New Zealand Herald, 24 May 2000; also see Susanna Trnka, "Land, life and labour: Indo-Fijian claims to citizenship in a changing Fiji," **Oceania**, Vol. 75, No. 4, pp. 354-367;

⁴⁴² Indo-Fijian flee Speight thug attacks," The Australian, 13 June 2000.

based humanitarian group, the villagers decided to flee their homes.⁴⁴³

Political Hegemony Reinstated

The chiefs that were behind the armed nationalist takeover moved to place their key supporters in government. With the army divided the military leadership sought assistance from individuals with strong pro-nationalist ideas to lead the interim government. This strategy of appeasement of the nationalists by the military emboldened both the chiefs and their supporters to press ahead with their demands to establish chief-sponsored indigenous Fijian government.

By 20 June 2000, former Fiji Development Bank Chairman, Laisenia Qarase became the military's choice for the interim Prime Minister. Also included in the military line-up were two Indo-Fijians: Iqbal Jannif and Thomas Raju. But the armed indigenous nationalists were pushing very hard to have their representatives in an interim government and as a result the negotiations with the army collapsed. The worst part was that the army negotiators were sympathetic to the Speight coup and senior officers of the armed forces had compromised their position by presenting a whales tooth (tabua), as a gesture of conciliation, to the hijackers at the height of the crisis. The commander of the Fiji Military Forces Frank Bainimarama was also under pressure to come up with a plan that rewarded the coup makers and diffused the growing discontent

⁴⁴³ Phil Thornton, "Fiji Villager's Bus Trip to Freedom," USP Journalism Online, 14 June, 2000.

within senior military officers.

Endless television and press commentaries and the use of mobile phones provided the rebels, in particular George Speight, with a rich medium to argue in favour of the takeover. Speight, unlike Rabuka in 1987, successfully sold the coup to foreign journalists, who sifted through volumes of information to understand conflicting claims on the plight of indigenous Fijians. On 28 June, the chief military negotiator, Colonel Tarakinikini, confirmed that the army would appoint an interim government and would retain executive authority until the hostages were released.⁴⁴⁴

On 3 July, it was revealed that an all indigenous Fijian interim government would be sworn in.⁴⁴⁵ By then, the interim Prime Minister designate, Laisenia Qarase and his team had drawn up the "blueprint" for indigenous Fijian supremacy. The objectives of the blueprint were two-fold. Firstly, it was to appease the coup plotters and the extremist elements within the indigenous Fijian community and secondly, it was to be used as a springboard to secure indigenous Fijian political hegemony, which was lost to the FLP-led coalition

⁴⁴⁴ "Military to set up Government," Canberra Times, 29 June 2000.

⁴⁴⁵ Fiji Village News, 3 July 2000. Among the names were Prime Minister Laisania Qarase; Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Fijian Affairs Ratu Epeli Nailatikau; Minister for Finance Jone Kubuabola; Minister for Agriculture Luke Raturvuki; Foreign Affairs Kaliopate Tavola; Home Affairs Talemo Ratakele; Education Nelson Delailomaloma; Attorney General Alpate Qetaki; Labour Relations Hector Hatch; Infrastructure and Energy Joketani Cokanasiga; Housing John Teiawa; Transport and Tourism Jone Koroitmana; Rural Development Fatiaki Misau; Health Peter Nacuva; Youth and Sports Keni Dakuidreketi; Land Ratu Josua Toganivalu; Women and Culture Paula Satutu; Commerce Tomasi Vuetilovoni; and Assistant Minister for Fijian Affairs Ratu Suliano Matanitobua

following the 1999 general election. On 3 July, the commander of the Fiji Military Forces, Commodore Frank Bainimarama, in a press release argued in favour of implementing affirmative action and social justice programs for indigenous Fijians. According to the commander, there was an urgent need to bridge the gap between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians in commerce and in professional and technical education. Besides affirmative action, a review of the 1997 constitution was also on the agenda.⁴⁴⁶

Divisions within the Army

Bainimarama's own position was precarious with a divided army and lack of support from influential chiefs. Despite attempts by those in authority to accommodate the demands of the hijackers, a deadly gun battle erupted between armed rebels and members of the Fiji Military Forces on 4 July. A Fiji Military Forces patrol was identified and pursued by some 300 Speight supporters, who surrounded three military officers. A fifteen-minute gun battle ensued and 10 people were shot in the skirmish. Meanwhile, army officers sympathetic to George Speight mutinied at Sukanaivalu and Vaturekuka barracks in Vanua Levu as rebels warned of a large-scale revolt against the authorities. On 7 July, the military accepted Naitasiri Provincial Council's offer to mediate talks between Speight and the military. In an exclusive interview with Radio Fiji, military negotiator, Filipo Tarakinikini suggested that "the proposal from Naitasiri was quite realistic and practical under the

⁴⁴⁶ Statement by the Commander of the Fiji Military Forces and Executive Head of State, Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama, Monday 3 July 2000.

circumstances.⁴⁴⁷

The Fiji military intervened to stop raids by Speight supporters on hydro-electric power stations in a bid to shut down the nation's electricity as roadblocks were erected throughout Suva by the people of Naitasiri to undermine the military.⁴⁴⁸ At the Queen Elizabeth Barracks, the paramount chief of Naitasiri, Ratu Inoke Takiveikata put forward a plan to resolve the hostage crisis by proposing an outcome in favour of the hijackers. But behind-the-scene political posturing by the military was only strengthening the resolve on the part of the Speight group to push on with their agenda.

On 9 July, an agreement, known as the Muanikau Accord, was signed between the Commander of the Fiji Military Forces and George Speight for the release of hostages. Furthermore, this Accord called for an unconditional reinstatement of all service personnel involved in the illegal takeover and the return of weapons removed from the armoury at the height of the crisis. Despite achieving all his demands, Speight and his group remained defiant. On 12 July, the traditional confederacies of Kubuna spearheaded a 300 member Bose ni Turaga (Provincial Chiefs) meeting at the Parliamentary complex. At the end of the meeting, the delegates endorsed Ratu Josefa Iloilo as the President and Ratu Jope Seniloli and Ratu Tevita Vakalalabure as Vice Presidents. Speight forwarded his own list of Cabinet Ministers as a counter-response to the one

⁴⁴⁷ "Naitasiri mediates peace talks," *Fijilive*, 7 July 2000.

⁴⁴⁸ "Rebels disrupt life across the country," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 July 2000.

nominated by the military.⁴⁴⁹

Blueprint on Indigenous Supremacy

On 13 July, the new Interim Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase presented a blueprint on indigenous Fijian supremacy to the Great Council of Chiefs, which was struggling to persuade the hijackers in Parliament to release the hostages. The blueprint was virtually the wish-list of the George Speight group. Included in the list of programs were a proposal for a new constitution by 24 July 2001, return of all Crown Schedule A and B land to the Native Land Trust Board, agricultural leases to be moved to Native Land Trust Act (NLTA), establishment of a Land Claims Tribunal, strengthening of the Great Council of Chiefs, establishment of a Fijian and Rotuman Trust Fund, a compulsory national savings scheme for Fijians and Rotumans, affirmative action provisions, tax exemptions for Fijian companies, Fijian Education Fund, assistance to Yasana Holdings Limited, Government shares for Fijians, 50 per cent of all licenses and contracts for Fijians, assistance in purchasing shares, assistance for Provincial Business Participation, and assistance to buy back Freehold land.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁹ "Kanaimawi for PM," *Fijilive*, 12 July 2000. Among those nominated by the Speight group were: Prime Minister Ratu Epeli Kanaimawi (Bau chief); Attorney General Matebalavu Rabo; Finance Eroni Mavoa; Fijian Affairs Ratu Inoke Takiveikata (Naitasiri chief); Foreign Affairs Kaliopate Tavola; Trade Navitalai Naisoro; Home Affairs Tevita Bukarau; Communications and Transport Ratu Timoci Silatolu (Rewa chief); Agriculture Ratu Josefa Dimuri (Vanua Levu chief); Civil Aviation; Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure (Cakaudrove chief); Lands and Mineral Maika Qarikau (head of the NLTB); Tourism Viliame Gavoka; Works and Energy Iliesa Duvuloco; and Information Josefa Nata.

⁴⁵⁰ Blueprint for the Protection of Fijian and Rotuman Rights and Interests and the Advancement of their Development, Presentation to the Great Council of

Speight Group Defiant

As Qarase laid his vision for Fiji, George Speight was still not cooperating. At first he was waiting for the much-promised immunity from the army and on 14 July, George Speight triumphantly waved a copy of a Decree, which stated that:

Members of his Group who took part in the unlawful takeover of the Government democratically elected under the 1997 Constitution on the 19th day of May, 2000 and the subsequent holding of hostages until the 13th day of July, 2000 shall be immune from criminal prosecution under the Penal Code or the breach of any law of Fiji and civil liability in respect of any damage or injury to property or person connected with the unlawful seizure of Government powers, the unlawful detention of certain members of the House of Representatives and any other person..⁴⁵¹

The immunity decree was not enough for Speight, who continued to defy the military and the Great Council of Chiefs, which sent a delegation to the hijackers to plead for the release of the hostages. Finally, the 56 day siege came to an end and Chaudhry and his Cabinet Ministers were released from captivity. Meanwhile, the Great Council of Chiefs and the military finalised a 20-member Cabinet and 11 Assistant Ministers, led by interim Prime Minister

Chiefs by the Interim Prime Minister, Laisania Qarase, 13 July 2001.
⁴⁵¹ Decree No. 18 of 2000.

Laisenia Qarase. Among the coup sympathisers in the new line-up were Ratu Timoci Silatolu, Ratu Inoke Takiveikata, Adi Finau Tabakaucoro and Simione Kaitani.⁴⁵²

A new President and Vice President were also sworn in on 19 July. Ratu Josefa Iloilo, a high chief from the vanua of Vuda was the preferred Speight candidate for the office of the Presidency. At the height of the crisis, western chiefs, including Ratu Iloilo went and spoke at length with the hijackers about the desire for the west to form a separate government if the crisis continued. In a traditional ceremony performed mainly in an atmosphere of anti-Indo-Fijian rhetoric, the chiefs of the west acquiesced to the carrot offered by the hijackers. Tui Vuda, Ratu Josefa Iloilo, who was Vice President of Fiji on 19 May 2000 would be appointed the new President along with Tailevu chief Ratu Jope Seniloli as Vice President.

At the swearing in ceremony of the new President, Australian journalist Paul Daley noted that George Speight was also present at the ceremony. Speight's presence signaled the careful behind-the-scene negotiations with the President on the composition of a new interim government. On one side, there was intense lobby by the Speight group and on the other, there was Qarase and the military. On 18 July, Speight rejected the new cabinet proposal because Speight supporters were given junior positions. Speight stated that "the proposed interim government is totally unacceptable to us. It will result in a very

⁴⁵² "New Cabinet named," Fijilive, 18 July 2000.

serious backlash.⁴⁵³ Meanwhile, Fiji's ousted Prime Minister, Mahendra Chaudhry, called for a United Nation's sponsored referendum to gauge support for the ousted coalition Government. But the Great Council of Chiefs was against the return of the Chaudhry government and the chiefs were split along provincial and confederacy lines and could only agree to form an all indigenous Fijian interim government to appease the extremist nationalist elements within the indigenous Fijian community. By then the commander of the Fiji Military Forces had abrogated the 1997 Constitution and had given immunity to the hijackers in Parliament. But due to international pressure and reports of further violence by the Speight group, the Fiji military arrested the hijackers, who were incarcerated in a make-shift prison on the island of Nukulau⁴⁵⁴.

Before Speight and his supporters left the Parliament, they had buried a civilian supporter, Kolinio Tabua on the parliamentary ground as a celebration of a new martyr to the Speight's cause. Tabua's family triumphantly claimed heroism, along with five other injured rebels in the 4 July skirmish with the army.⁴⁵⁵ After leaving the Parliament, George Speight supporters established a base at the Kalabu Primary School. On 27 July, the military commander had run out of patience and ordered his forces to apprehend the rebels by force. The decision by the commander to move against the Speight group materialised after reports of threats on the life of the new President Ratu Josefa Iloilo, who was accused

⁴⁵³ "Shaky start to a new day in coup-coup land," The Age, 19 July 2000; also see: "Fiji prepares for the next onslaught", The Age, 19 July 2000.

⁴⁵⁴ George Speight, Jo Nata and Tevita Bukarau were arrested on 26 July, 2001.

⁴⁵⁵ "That man again," The Economist, 22-28 July 2000.

by the rebels of denying them fair representation in the new interim government.

A team of heavily armed soldiers invaded the Kalabu Primary School where the Speight group had set up its camp and following a brief exchange of gunfire, one rebel was killed and some 30 were treated at the Colonial War Memorial hospital in Suva for various bullet wounds.⁴⁵⁶ About 400 people at Kalabu were detained by the Police Mobile Force. With the rebels behind bars, the swearing-in of the new interim government took place on 28 July.

The Outcomes of the Speight Takeover

The outcomes of the 56-day siege not only divided indigenous Fijians but the FLP-led Peoples' Coalition government also started to fragment. Some members within the FLP were pushing for a GNU whilst others wanted a return of the Chaudhry administration in its entirety. By 1 August, the deposed Prime Minister, Mahendra Chaudhry, was planning a court challenge over the dismissal of his government and the abrogation of the 1997 Constitution.⁴⁵⁷

Meanwhile, Indo-Fijians on Vanua Levu continued to be terrorised by supporters of George Speight. In Dreketi, landowners took over government offices and some 150 Indo-Fijian families were under house arrest. In Tailevu,

⁴⁵⁶ "Rebel dies in gunbattle," *Fijilive*, 27 July 2000.

⁴⁵⁷ "Chaudhry plans court challenge to dismissal," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 August 2000

especially in the districts of Namalata and Wainibuka,⁴⁵⁸ numerous Indo-Fijian farmers were victims of violence and premeditated violent raids. Many had to flee to the safety of friends and relatives in Suva as the military and the police remained ineffective in preserving law and order. In Savusavu, Wailevu villagers erected roadblocks and some took over freehold properties. Also under attack was Waidice Indo-Fijian settlement outside Korovou. Weeks of terror saw three Indo-Fijian homes destroyed by arson and continued attacks drove 200 settlers to flee to safety elsewhere.

According to the deposed Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry, indigenous Fijian rights were used as a smokescreen to depose his government. At an interview in Australia's Dateline program, Chaudhry stated that indigenous rights were well protected in the 1997 constitution and that elite elements in the indigenous Fijian society were responsible for the events of 19 May 2000.⁴⁵⁹ Indo-Fijians, in particular, felt very insecure during the height of the crisis. Rural Fiji became a scene of ongoing lawlessness as the military and the police failed to restore order. Indo-Fijians questioned the priorities of the interim government led by Laisenia Qarase, who swiftly produced a "blueprint" to appease the indigenous Fijian militants but had done nothing to assist mostly Indo-Fijian families terrorised by indigenous Fijian village thugs.

By August 2000, Fiji was still under a cloud of instability. On 8 August, Private

⁴⁵⁸ "Nightmare continues for Indians in rural Fiji," *Fijilive*, 2 August 2000.

⁴⁵⁹ Interview with Mahendra Chaudhry, Deposed Fijian Prime Minister, *Dateline*, 2 August 2000.

Joela Draunicevuga Weleilakeba and Corporal Raj Kumar were ambushed and killed by rebels between Sawani and Navuso in Naitasiri.⁴⁶⁰ With a small group of rebels still on the run, inquiry into the illegal takeover of Parliament started with the announcement that the Police Commissioner, Isikia Savua, faced a closed tribunal to determine his involvement in the May 2000 events. The inquiry was presided by the Chief Justice, Sir Timoci Tuivaqa, Fred Achari and Amani Rokotinaviti.

Most, if not all, of the objectives of the hijackers were fulfilled. An elected government was dismissed by the President who in turn was forced out of office, and an all-indigenous Fijian interim government was sworn in⁴⁶¹ and a Constitution Review Committee under the leadership of coup sympathisers was set up. The chiefs behind the 19 May coup were in control through the interim government and the Great Council of Chiefs, even though George Speight and his armed men were imprisoned and waiting trial for treason. The intervention of the army and in particular by army commander Bainimarama in arresting George Speight and his supporters caused great displeasure among chiefs and plans were hatched to assassinate Bainimarama. The failed attempt on Bainimarama's life, on 2 November, would drastically change Bainimarama's political position from supporting indigenous nationalism⁴⁶² and chiefly

⁴⁶⁰ "Cold-blooded murder," *Fijilive*, 9 August, 2000.

⁴⁶¹ Statement by the Commander, Fiji Military Forces, and Head of State and Head of Government, Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama, 3 July 2000; also see Statement on the Appointment of a Military Appointed Civilian Government, Felix Anthony, 5 July 2001.

⁴⁶² Statement by Commander, Fiji Military Forces, and Executive Head of State and Head of Government, Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama, 3 July 2000.

hegemony to challenging them.

On 2 November 2000, Counter Revolutionary Warfare Unit members executed a mutiny, which resulted in the loss of seven indigenous Fijian lives. The mutiny confirmed fears that the army was deeply divided over the events of 19 May 2000. There were also concerns that high chiefs and several senior army officers were still attempting to complete what Speight had started. The masterminds behind the May coup had only achieved part of their objective and were facing investigation and possible criminal charges. Worse perhaps was the inability of the Great Council of Chiefs, which by the end of the crisis had split up into rival factions, to display some semblance of unity by supporting the interim government and the blueprint on indigenous supremacy. Unfortunately, both the interim government and the Great Council of Chiefs could not anticipate a land mark 15 November 2000 judgment by Justice Anthony Gates.⁴⁶³ This judgment was the turning point for Fiji for it laid the platform for the August 2001 general elections. The judgment by Justice Gates confirmed that the hijacked coalition government was the lawful government of Fiji and that the President of Fiji Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara had not resigned and that the subsequent abrogation of the constitution by the commander of the Fiji Military Forces on 29 May 2000 was unconstitutional. Quickly the interim government appealed the judgment and on 1 March 2001, the full bench of the High Court in Suva rejected the appeal, forcing those in authority to prepare for general

⁴⁶³ In the High Court of Fiji at Lautoka, Civil Action No. HBC0217.00L between Chandrika Prasad and the Republic of Fiji – 1st Respondent and the Attorney General 2nd Respondent.

elections.

On 13 March 2001, the Great Council of Chiefs resolved that: the 1997 Constitution was still the supreme law of Fiji; Ratu Josefa Iloilo and Ratu Jope Seniloli were appointed President and Vice President effective 15 March 2001; the chiefs accept that the President has "reserve powers" which can be used at certain times; parliament be dissolved; the President appoint a caretaker government; and that the interim administration's "blueprint" be maintained and the Constitution Review Committee continue its work. Political parties and groups, motivated by the GCC resolutions, started preparing for the election. However, the Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF) challenged the legality of the path taken by the President of Fiji and on 11 July 2001, Justice Michael Scott dismissed the application paving the way for general elections.

The events from 2 November to 11 July greatly disturbed the commander of the Fiji military. He had come to realize that he had been provided with defective information by his own senior officers⁴⁶⁴ who supported the Speight cause and furthermore, he realized that the policy of appeasing the nationalists by implementing an ethnically exclusive agenda, similar to what the chiefs had done after the 1987 coups, was both wrong and immoral and only encouraged further indigenous extremism. Moreover, the commander was concerned about

464 The Fiji Sun, 8 July 2001. An affidavit from Kemueli Vosavereto the military tribunal stated that senior military officers including Colonels Jeremaia Waqanisau, Savenaca Draunidalo, Alfred Tuatoko, Ulaisi Vatu, Maciu Cerewale and Lieutenant Colonels Filipo Tarakinikini and Etuweni Caucau as key supporters of the 19 May 2000 uprising. Also see The Fiji Times, 18 February 2005.

the role played by some chiefs during the crisis and started to re-evaluate his decision to place indigenous nationalists in key positions within the interim government.

As Fiji prepared for the general election in 2001, the chiefs behind the takeover had formed two political parties with exclusive ethnic and cultural agendas. The coup of May 2000 allowed for the re-assertion of the chiefly hegemony, which was challenged and undermined by the Peoples' Coalition government led by the FLP. Following the coup, indigenous chiefs were divided along provincial and confederacy lines but with the assistance of the military, the interim government attempted to create indigenous unity by forming a coalition with a nationalist indigenous party.

In 1990, the SVT party was officially sponsored by the GCC to entrench chiefly political hegemony. However in 2001, the new indigenous parties, the Soqosoqo ni Duavata ni Levenivanua (SDL) and the Conservative Alliance Matanitu Vanua (CAMV), did not get official support from the GCC, but chiefs instructed indigenous Fijians to support these parties in a bid to establish an indigenous political bloc, similar to the one instituted after the 1987 coups.

The 2001 Elections

According to Brij Lal, "George Speight cast a long shadow over the campaign. Fijian political parties competed with each other to court his supporters,

promising to fulfill his agenda of enshrining Fijian political paramountcy in perpetuity.”⁴⁶⁵ There were 18 political parties contesting the election and some, if not all, quickly put together a party manifesto to lure a cross-section of Fiji's population. The FLP settled its leadership issue after a majority of party members gave full support to party leader Mahendra Chaudhry. Unhappy with Chaudhry's leadership style, a long time Labour stalwart and former Deputy Prime Minister in the coalition government, Tupeni Baba, broke ranks and formed the New Labour Unity Party (NLUP). The interim Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase launched his own Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua party (SDL) and campaigned strongly on indigenous Fijian issues. The Great Council of Chiefs before the election withdrew its official sponsorship for the SVT party but silently supported the SDL and the CAMV parties.

As Fiji prepared for general elections, many unanswered questions still remained regarding the events of 19 May 2000. There were divisions within the army with suggestions that the army was split along provincial lines and that any further indigenous uprising could create a situation far more volatile and violent than those witnessed in 2000. Adding to the political uncertainty was the prolonged detention of soldiers suspected of the 2 November 2000 mutiny and rumours that some senior army officers were yet to be investigated for their role in the Speight coup. Detained rebel soldiers named senior military officers including Colonels Jeremaia Waqanisau, Savenaca Draunidalo, Alfred Tuatoko, Ulaisi Vatu, Maciu Cerewale and Lieutenant Colonels Filipo

⁴⁶⁵ Brij V. Lal, “In George Speight’s Shadow: Fiji General Elections of 2001,” **The Journal of Pacific History**, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2002, p. 87.

Tarakinikini and Etuweni Caucau as key supporters of the May 19 uprising.

Above all, the people of Naitasiri were upset over the prosecution of their high chief Ratu Inoke Takiveikata, who was charged with aiding the mutiny at the military barrack.

A group of pro-Speight supporters launched the Conservative Alliance Matanitu Vanua Party, which was expected to win a majority of indigenous Fijian nationalist votes, particularly in Tailevu and in Vanua Levu as both indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians remained divided into various intra communal factions. Fiji citizens, once again in little more than two years, went to the polls from 25 August to 1 September 2001. The hegemony of the chiefs had been effectively compromised as chiefs fragmented into rival blocs. However, there was general consensus among chiefs that indigenous Fijians should unite. In order to achieve indigenous unity, a new hegemonic entity in the form of the SDL party was established. The purpose of the SDL was to unite indigenous Fijians and to re-invent and implement the affirmative action policies of the Alliance and the SVT parties.

There was a re-alignment of the indigenous political bloc with the political alliance between the SDL and the CAMV. The SDL was the face of “moderate” nationalism whereas the CAMV espoused “militant” nationalism of the George Speight group. Both parties, nevertheless, shared the ideology of excluding Indo-Fijians from political power. As a result, a nationalist historic bloc based on cultural and ethnic exclusion was established, even though such political

configurations were untenable under the multiracial constitution. After the 2001 election, there was tension between the multiracial 1997 Constitution and the ethnic exclusive policies of the SDL-CAMV coalition government.

Under the 1997 Constitution, political parties campaigned for 71 seats in the House of Representatives out of which 19 were Indo-Fijian communal seats, 23 indigenous Fijian communal seats, 3 General Voter seats, 1 Rotuma and 25 common roll seats. As expected, the political campaign was polarised along racial lines. The SDL party argued in favour of indigenous Fijian political unity and paramountcy of indigenous Fijian interest, whereas the CAMV, formed by the supporters of George Speight coup, highlighted the plight of rebels incarcerated on the Nukulau Island by the military and lobbied for their immediate release. The NLUP, the SVT, the NFP and the FAP formed a "moderate" group, arguing in favour of peaceful co-existence of Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians under the 1997 Constitution.

The Fiji Labour Party accused the SDL of vote buying after it was revealed that farm equipments were handed out to secure political support. Other parties including the CAMV and the SVT accused the SDL of abuse. For the Indo-Fijians, the focus was on the 1997 Constitution and land leases. Chaudhry made "respect" and dignity" a centerpiece of his election campaign. The NFP, in contrast, failed to provide clear direction and leadership, despite putting forward an impressive manifesto and electing a new leader Attar Singh and Deputy Dorsami Naidu. Furthermore, the NFP alienated some voters by putting

Labour last on its preference list.⁴⁶⁶ Not only the NFP, but the SDL, the CAMV, and the Bai Kei Viti party (BKV) put Labour last.

There were some 201 candidates for communal and 150 for open seats. Voting started on 25 August and long queues at polling stations prompted the Elections Office to engage more human and computer resources to rectify the situation. The United Nations and the Commonwealth Secretariat sent its observers to oversee the elections and there was tight security at the polls. Following the end of voting on 1 September, counting began in the evening of 3 September.

Initially, the FLP showed strong performance by capturing all Indo-Fijian seats and 8 open seats. Afterwards, it was stuck with 27 seats. The SDL polled strongly in all indigenous Fijian communal seats and by 5 September it sped ahead of Labour with 18 indigenous Fijian communal seats and 12 open seats. The CAMV party caused a sensation when its candidate, Nukulau prisoner George Speight, won the Tailevu seat and the party captured 5 communal and one open seat.

The SVT, the NFP, the PANU, and the BKV and other smaller parties including the Girmit Heritage and the Freedom and Justice parties failed to win any seats. The leader of the NLUP Tupeni Baba lost his seat while his party won 2

⁴⁶⁶ While on one hand preferential voting system was snubbed by indigenous nationalists, on the other various political parties banded together to ensure that the Fiji Labour Party was put last on the preference list.

seats: a General and an open seat. At the end of the count, there were 2 independents, 1 NFP (Nadi Open seat), 27 FLP, 6 CAMV and 32 SDL.

Immediately following the publication of the election result, both the FLP and the SVT accused the SDL of vote rigging and other dubious practices at the polling stations. The results indicated that all if not most of the SVT support moved to the SDL. Apisai Tora's BKV party, formed to split the PANU, assisted in transferring votes to the SDL. The CAMV polled very well in Vanua Levu and in Tailevu, the stronghold of coup leader George Speight. The Indo-Fijians were solidly behind the FLP (75 per cent) while urban Indo-Fijians supported NFP (14 per cent) and SDL (6 per cent). At the end of the count, none of the parties had an outright majority and Qarase needed to either invite the CAMV to form a coalition government or make arrangements with the NFP, the NLUP, the UGP, or the 2 independents. The SDL Leader, Laisenia Qarase was sworn in as Fiji's elected Prime Minister on 10 September 2001 after he secured the support of the CAMV party.

The decision by the SDL to nominate Qarase for the position of the Prime Minister was unanimous, following his party's strong performance in the August 2001 general election. While none of the parties won an outright majority, the SDL captured 32 seats in Fiji's 71-seat Parliament. Following the conclusion of the election on 7 September, Qarase was required by Section 99 of the 1997 Constitution to invite all parties with more than 10 per cent of the total seats in parliament to join his cabinet and as a result, he invited the FLP to form a grand

coalition but changed his mind after the FLP leader Mahendra Chaudhry suggested that the Korolevu Declaration of 1999 form the basis for resolving party policy and manifesto differences. Instead of pursuing a dialogue with Mahendra Chaudhry, Qarase chose to work with the CAMV members, who supported the May 2000 uprising against the Chaudhry Government.

At first, the CAMV remained steadfast in its demand for an amnesty to the coup leaders facing treason charges thus rejecting a coalition with the SDL, which rejected the amnesty. However, after intervention of George Speight from his island prison on Nukulau, the CAMV backed away from this key demand for the sake of indigenous Fijian unity and agreed to join Qarase's SDL. In associating with the CAMV, Prime Minister Qarase lost support of the NFP member, Prem Singh, and the NLUP leader Tupeni Baba sanctioned party member Kenneth Zinck not to remain in the SDL coalition. According to NLUP, it had an agreement with the SDL that the latter would not include elected members of the CAMV in any governing coalition. Despite these problems, an all-indigenous Fijian cabinet was sworn in on 12 September 2000 as the FLP filed a writ in the Fiji High Court challenging the legality of the new Cabinet on 25 September. The FLP also accused the President Ratu Josefa Iloilo of acting outside the constitution and colluding with the SDL. With the war of words continuing between the SDL and the FLP, the Chief Justice of Fiji, Sir Timoci Tuivaqa on 14 September conceded that the cabinet line-up may have been "unconstitutional." Qarase and his team were concerned and suggested that the FLP take its rightful position as an opposition and stop showing disrespect

to the Office of the President.

The post-2001 election Fiji remained politically unstable. Allegations of corruption and vote buying continued and the FLP challenged the Qarase government for the unconstitutional exclusion of the party from the Cabinet. On 15 February 2002, the Fiji Court of Appeal ruled that "that section 99(5) of the 1997 Constitution obliges a Prime Minister to invite, in unconditional terms, parties which have 10% or more of the membership of the House to be represented in the Cabinet in accordance with that provision."⁴⁶⁷ Immediately afterwards, the Qarase Government expressed its intention to take the issue to the Supreme Court of Fiji, which in 2003 upheld the earlier judgment in support of a multiparty cabinet. The SDL did not want to share power with the FLP because it went against the ideology of the ethnically exclusive indigenous bloc, which was advocated by the chiefs and the political leaders of the SDL and the CAMV.

Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase and the chiefs had established an indigenous hegemonic bloc after the election of 2001. This bloc was an attempt to reconcile various indigenous factions that had emerged before the 1999 election and after the 2000 coup. The colonial policy that continued after independence was re-invented once again to keep both indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians divided into rival political bloc. Inter-ethnic alliances, formed before

⁴⁶⁷ Fiji Court of Appeal, Civil Action No. 282 of 2001 between Mahendra Chaudhry (Plaintiff) and Laisenia Qarase (First Respondent), President of Fiji (Second Respondent), Attorney General (Third Respondent), pp. 24-25.

the 1999 election, had crumbled once more under the weight of ethnicisation of Fiji politics.

The SDL and the CAMV coalition government started to implement the “blueprint on indigenous supremacy,” which provided affirmative action programs, similar to the ones provided by the Alliance Party (1970-1987), the post-1987 coup interim government (1987-1992) and the SVT (1992-1999). Affirmative action was used to in post-2000 coup Fiji to counter the factionalised indigenous polity. Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase championed indigenous unity and argued that the events of 2000 were an expression of indigenous insecurity, caused by the policies of the deposed FLP-led Peoples’ Coalition Government. By supporting in principle the 2000 coup, Prime Minister Qarase and his SDL party were successful in uniting indigenous factions after the 2001 election. But the new indigenous hegemonic bloc under the SDL-CAMV coalition was challenged by the commander of the Fiji Military Forces, Frank Bainimarama, who saw the events of 2000 as a calculated move by the indigenous nationalists and some chiefs to depose an elected multi-ethnic government, undermine President Ratu Mara and foment a bloody mutiny in November 2000.

Conclusion

I have shown in this Chapter that following the election of a multi-ethnic Peoples’ Coalition Government of Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry, the

colonial policy of creating ethnic divisions was once again re-invented by indigenous nationalists which caused indigenous Fijian political parties in the Chaudhry government to fracture. On 19 May 2000, a group of indigenous nationalists, led by George Speight, stormed Fiji's parliament and held cabinet members hostage for 56 days. Within that time, the coup leaders attempted to undermine the authority of the President, Ratu Mara, who was accused of supporting the 1997 Constitution and an Indo-Fijian-led government.

I have demonstrated in significant detail that after the coup failed to go according to plan, Indo-Fijians in the rural areas became targets of racial violence. Worse the military, which took over executive authority from the President in July 2000, was divided along with the GCC. After securing all their demands, the coup leaders remained defiant and wanted their own nominees in the new interim government formed by the military. The commander had run out of patience and the military arrested George Speight and installed an interim government that was sympathetic to the indigenous nationalist cause. However, divisions within the indigenous community continued resulting in a bloody mutiny at the military barracks in November 2000. The target of the mutiny was commander Bainimarama, who was accused by indigenous nationalists sympathetic to the 2000 coup of betraying the indigenous cause.

The 2000 coup was based on the strategy of unifying factionalised indigenous groups under a hegemonic indigenous bloc. However, the coup failed because it did not have the support of some influential chiefs (Ratu Mara), it was led by

a small group within the army (the Counter Revolutionary Warfare Unity) and once the coup did not progress according to plan, the coup leadership became extremely partisan and started to exploit provincial divisions to further their objective. To manage an increasingly unstable state, the Great Council of Chiefs supported the nominees of the coup leaders to the position of President and the Vice President, assisted in establishing an indigenous interim government with policies along the lines advocated by the militant nationalists, and further vested in the President the cultural authority to act outside the multiethnic constitution. In doing so, the Great Council of Chiefs undermined its cultural as well as constitutional authority and exposed itself to attacks from the military.

Besides divisions and factions within the indigenous community, an Indo-Fijian, Chandrika Prasad, challenged the 2000 coup and its aftermath in the High Court of Fiji. As a result, the multiracial 1997 Constitution, the Peoples' Coalition Government and the President were re-instated. In response to the High Court decision, the GCC agreed to a new general election after the military-installed interim-government members formed the SDL. Following the August 2001 election, a new indigenous bloc was established with a coalition between the SDL and the CAMV. However, the military leadership did not share the ideological foundations of the post-2000 coup indigenous bloc and challenged the state. Resistance by the military to the SDL-CAMV coalition government is discussed in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER 9

MILITARY COUNTER-HEGEMONY

Indigenous Fragmentation Revisited

This Chapter is organized around the theme of military counter-hegemony against an ethnically and culturally exclusive indigenous bloc. The military in Fiji transformed itself from an ethnicist institution to a counter-hegemonic force for social and political change. As noted in the previous Chapter, the move to assassinate the commander on 2 November 2000 and the alliance between indigenous nationalist forces led commander Bainimarama to re-think his support for the post-2000 coup political order.

The overt political struggle between the government and the Fiji Military forces began not long after the 2001 general elections. The SDL quickly tried to support coup suspects by providing them with lucrative positions overseas and in cabinet. The chiefs associated with the Speight coup had triumphed and President Ratu Mara, the key target of the events of 2000, retired and an indigenous Fijian political bloc under the hegemony of the SDL-led coalition was established. At the same time, indigenous intellectuals had implemented a blueprint on supremacy, which provided the framework for affirmative action programs for indigenous Fijians. The commander of the RFMF was disturbed by the 2000 coup and, in particular, concerned about the SDL party after it formed a coalition government with the CAMV, which had within its ranks

supporters of coup leader George Speight.⁴⁶⁸

As the influence of George Speight supporters within the Qarase government increased, so did influence of the government on senior military officers opposed to the army commander. In December 2003 allegations surfaced that the military commander Frank Bainimarama provided scenarios to senior officers for deposing the SDL-CAMV government. Military officers with known ties to Speight group went to the press and to the Minister for Home Affairs with a complaint that the government was at risk of being ousted in a coup. The Minister for Home Affairs expressed his preference not to renew the commander's tenure after it expired in 2003. In response to the allegations of an impending coup, the panic-stricken SDL Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarase, hastily composed a National Security Committee (NSC), which recommended a Commission of Inquiry against the RFMF. However, the proposal for a Commission of Inquiry was rejected by the President Ratu Josefa Iloilo following consultations with the army commander.

The first of the high profile chief to face the brunt of the law was Vice President, Ratu Jope Seniloli. The Bauan high chief was convicted of treason for his part in the events of 2000. State witness Ratu Tua'akitau Cokanauto argued that "in our traditional roles as chiefs, when Ratu Seru Cakobau (the king of Fiji who ceded Fiji to Great Britain) put down his club, he took up the rule of law". The

⁴⁶⁸ Fiji Government Press Release 7 April 2005

questions “were not here to judge Fijian tradition, but Fiji law.”⁴⁶⁹ On 26 November 2004, Justice Anthony Gates convicted Naitasiri chief Ratu Inoke Takiveikata on three counts of inciting mutiny, aimed at deposing the commander of the Fiji Military Forces Commodore Bainimarama.⁴⁷⁰ Metuisela Turagacati and another person known only as Kadi arranged a number of meetings between Takiveikata and members of the army's Counter Revolutionary Warfare Unit including its leader, Captain Shane Stevens. The two became state witnesses and revealed in detail how the Naitasiri chief wanted to repeat the events of May 2000 and get villagers to congregate and eventually barricade themselves inside the Queen Elizabeth Barracks in support of the mutiny on 2 November 2000.⁴⁷¹

The Fiji Military Forces closely monitored the political situation and the commander expressed disappointment at the speed with which the Attorney General moved to free Ratu Seniloli. Bainimarama argued that the intervention by the state in releasing Seniloli sent a wrong signal to future coup conspirators. His calls were also supported by opposition parties. The government, in response, maligned the commander in the media by accusing him of not following proper channels to air his grievance. The commander knew that the NSC established by the Government was merely a tool for George Speight supporters to remove him from office.

⁴⁶⁹ Fijilive, 4 August 2004.

⁴⁷⁰ The Age, 24 November 2004.

⁴⁷¹ Radio New Zealand 1 November 2004.

The SDL/CAMV government was out to remove the commander and ammunition was provided following audit claims that the military misused \$3 million for the purchase of army uniforms. The Criminal Investigations Department (CID) was called in to investigate falsification and manipulation of invoices and Local Purchase Orders (LPOS) by the military. The auditor's 2004 report revealed that approval from the Major Tenders Board was not obtained for all purchases and this resulted in the unauthorised issue of Local Purchase Orders totaling more than \$2.54 million. The report stated that the Director Military Resources had the authority to approve purchases of up to \$5,000 only. Meanwhile, the Land Forces Commander, Colonel Ioane Naivalurua, spoke at a special parade at the Queen Elizabeth Barracks in Suva to mark the beginning of 2005 and defended the actions taken by Commodore Bainimarama on his outburst against the SDL government.

Tensions between the government and the army further increased after the army commander withdrew military bodyguards for the Prime Minister, citing budgetary restraints. Meanwhile, Fiji's military commander asked the United Nations to cooperate in returning a former military spokesman Tarakinikini to assist with investigations into the 2000 coup and the subsequent military mutiny in the country.

Lieutenant Colonel Filipo Tarakinikini was officially listed as a deserter, despite claims that he resigned from the Fiji military. Following his departure from Fiji, Tarakinikini was based in New York after taking up the position of a security

officer for the United Nations in Israel. During the court martial of Corporal Lagilagi Vosabeci, former Government Printer Pio Bosco Tikoisuva told military court on 17 February 2005 that the RFMF spokesman Lt-Colonel Filipo Tarakinikini was to be the new chief-of-staff when George Speight and his group overthrew the elected government in May 2000.⁴⁷² Tarakinikini was the hostage negotiator and played a lead role in negotiating the Muanikau Accord, which gave immunity to the George Speight group. While Tarakinikini remained on the RFMF's most wanted list, the Ministers of Home Affairs as well as Foreign Affairs hit out at the commander for by-passing the Ministry in making a direct request to the United Nations (UN) for relieving Colonel Saubulinayau of his duties in Iraq and in his place nominating Colonel Samuela Saumatua. Fiji TV reported that Foreign Minister Kaliopate Tavola was called in to facilitate the military's directive for a change of command in the guard in Iraq in what appeared to be an embarrassment for government.⁴⁷³

On 4 April 2005, Lands Minister Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu, Senator Ratu Josefa Dimuri, Tui Wailevu Ratu Rokodewala Niumataiwalu and Tui Nadogo Ratu Viliame Rovabokola were convicted for unlawful assembly at Sukanaivalu Barracks in Labasa at the height of the political crisis in 2000. Immediately after the verdict, Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase visited both Ratu Lalabalavu and Ratu Dimuri in prison and both were released on Compulsory Supervision Order. The commander once again criticised the Government for demonstrating poor judgment in visiting the prisoners and a war of words

⁴⁷² The Fiji Times, 18 February 2005

⁴⁷³ Fiji TV 16 February 2005.

similar to the one a year earlier regarding the release of Ratu Jope Seniloli ensued.

The Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF) President Reverend Akuila Yabaki asked "what about the hundreds of prisoners who have been serving their sentences and have been on good behaviour? They will now learn that they are lesser human beings than a government Minister or Senator under the Qarase government. Are they going to release Senator Ratu Takiveitaka responsible for the mutiny and 7 deaths at the FMF as well? A Minister sentenced by our Courts should serve his sentence on the same terms as other citizens." ⁴⁷⁴

Opposition parties were less than impressed except for the government's coalition partner, the CAMV, which believed it was the culturally appropriate for a chief not to serve prison term if he acted on behalf of his people. The CAMV was growing very uncomfortable with the commander's criticism of the chiefs involved in the Speight coup of 2000 and accused the commander of encouraging political instability.

The Racial Tolerance and Unity Bill

On 5 May 2005, another four individuals were convicted of coup related offences. Tevita Bukarau, Metuisela Mua and Eroni Lewaqai were sentenced to two-and-a-half years each while Viliame Sausauwai received a two-year jail

⁴⁷⁴ CCF 14 April, 2005.

term and Joji Bakoso, 15 months.⁴⁷⁵ On the same day, the government of Fiji announced the establishment of Independent Reconciliation and Unity Commission. The problem with such a Commission was that it was released close to the 2006 General Elections. Victims of the 2000 coup questioned why such a Commission was not established before. Victim groups, opposition and Non Government Organisations (NGOs) were also concerned that from the outset the Prime Minister as well as the Attorney General reiterated that a majority of indigenous Fijians involved in the 2000 upheavals did so because of customary obligation. As a result, the Commission had powers to pardon offences “political” in nature. The Qarase government defended the Racial Tolerance and Unity Bill (RTU) on the grounds that there were over 20,000 indigenous Fijians who converged on the Parliament at the height of the crisis in 2000 and it would take a long time to finalise all investigations. According to the Prime Minister Qarase, it was in the national interest to seek closure on the events of 2000 through a bill that granted amnesty to the coup perpetrators and their supporters.

The commander of the RFMF criticised the RTU Bill, labeling it as an instrument designed to undermine the judiciary, the Office of Public Prosecution, the Fiji Police Force and the Military, which played a leading role in ensuring that the perpetrators of the 2000 coup were brought to justice. The RFMF argued that the amnesty provision in the Bill would provide license to coup perpetrators to continue on the path of lawlessness in the future.

⁴⁷⁵ Fiji Times, 6 May 2005

Meanwhile the SDL government went to various provincial councils and presented the Bill as an opportunity to heal the wounds of 2000. The government further explained that the Bill was inspired by the Christian ethos of forgiveness. However, it did not explain the inequities inherent in the Bill. For example, the perpetrators could not tell the truth or seek meaningful reconciliation with the victims but could be granted amnesty, whereas the victims had to prove “gross human rights violation” before being considered for reparation.

The RFMF commander saw the bill as a form of ethnic cleansing. By proclaiming in the Bill the Deed of Cession and affirming that the events of 2000 were prompted by the collective fear of indigenous Fijians in their homeland, the government of Fiji had provided a legislative context for indigenous Fijian coup perpetrators to claim amnesty.

On 3 January 2006, the Commander called on the government of Fiji to resign and stated that the SDL was protecting coup suspects through the RTU Bill and played a part in the non-renewal of the contract of chief coup prosecutor Peter Ridgeway. Meanwhile Police Commissioner, Andrew Hughes, appointed to the post in 2003, confirmed that some 2000 individuals were interviewed by investigators in relation to 28 different offences during August 1999 to November 2000. Andrews also confirmed that the police were investigating claims by Sydney resident Maciu Navakasuasua who knew of a conspiracy to blow up businesses, including the Fiji Electricity Authority transformer and the

Nadi Airport.⁴⁷⁶ Also on the list were new allegations of plans to kill members of the coalition government at the height of the 2000 crisis.

On 8 January, Bainimarama threatened to overthrow the Government and on 12 January, Acting Land Forces Commander, Colonel Baledrokadroka confronted the army commander at the Nabua barracks over threats to depose the government as rumours quickly spread that dissenters within the army were under arrest. Colonel Baledrokadroka was cited for insubordination and resigned from the armed forces. According to the Baledrokadroka, a “treasonous” directive from the military commander caused him to confront Bainimarama. However, in the end, Bainimarama prevailed. A National Security Council meeting was quickly organised by Prime Minister Qarase who went on national television appealing for calm. But the events of January 2006 cast a long shadow over the May 2006 elections. The RFMF and the Qarase government were on a war path and the military wanted the government to change its policies and move away from the ethnic exclusive agenda.

The breakdown in relations between the military and the government was the beginning of Bainimarama’s counter-hegemony against the SDL-CAMV coalition government. The commander wanted to dismantle the RTU Bill and the ethnically exclusionary policies of the government which he believed to be a continuation of the colonial legacy. As noted before, when indigenous Fijian chiefs monopolised power under the 1990 Constitution, the colonial policies,

⁴⁷⁶ Fiji Police Force, Media Release, 5 January 2006.

<<http://www.police.gov.fj/release5ajan.html>> Accessed 12 January 2006.

continued after independence, could not be sustained because Indo-Fijians were removed entirely from political power, resulting in indigenous factionalisation. However, under the 1997 Constitution, there was a requirement that majority parties had to share power with their minority counterparts as part of a political compromise between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians leaders on multiparty cabinet. As a result, indigenous nationalists, including the Qarase government lobbied hard without success for constitutional amendments to politically marginalise Indo-Fijians. After the government realized that it was impossible to change the constitution without the support of the FLP, it started to aggressively re-introduce affirmative action and discriminatory policies of the Alliance and the SDL parties in violation of the 1997 Constitution.

Commander Bainimarama realised that politically marginalising Indo-Fijians would lead to a re-play of events from 1987 when indigenous Fijians split into rival competing factions, causing political instability and upheavals. As mentioned in Chapter 7, Rabuka faced increasing indigenous competitions for political power from within the chief-sponsored SDL party from 1992 to 1999 and tried without success to form a majority political bloc with the Indo-Fijian NFP before the 1999 election. After the 2001 election, Prime Minister Qarase faced similar pressures but unlike Rabuka, Qarase co-opted George Speight supporters, who were responsible for causing divisions within the army. For Bainimarama, it was indigenous nationalists behind the 2000 coup who wanted him removed as the army commander.

Fiji entered the 2006 elections with the problems between the government and the military unresolved. Furthermore, the 2006 election highlighted that the colonial policy of divide and rule and ethnic compartmentalisation continued after the 2001 elections by the Qarase government.

The 2006 Elections

Fiji went to the polls from 6 to 13 May 2006 to elect a government under an electoral system aimed at moving the island nation from runaway communalism to inter-communal bargaining and coalitions. However, unlike any of the previous two general elections, the 2006 elections went down in history as the most divisive as various ethnic groups rallied behind their own communal parties. The Indo-Fijians were solidly behind the FLP whereas the indigenous Fijians voted in large numbers for the SDL.⁴⁷⁷ The New Alliance Party of Fiji (NAPF) and the National Federation Party (NFP), which advocated policies that were in-between those of the FLP and the SDL, failed to win a single seat. Before the election the CAMV party was absorbed into the SDL party and the military conducted a “truth” campaign, advising indigenous Fijians that the SDL government was racist, corrupt and that the intent behind the RTU Bill was to stifle investigations into the events of 2000.

Compared with the 2001 general election, the FLP improved its percentage of total seats from 39 per cent to 44 percent. The SDL also improved its overall

⁴⁷⁷ The Fiji Times, 13 May 2006

standing from the previous election from 45 per cent to 51 per cent. The FLP dominated Indo-Fijian communal constituencies and polled an average 81 per cent of Indo-Fijian votes whereas the NFP polled only 15.1 per cent. Compared with 1999, 2001 and 2006, NFP's share of Indo-Fijian votes continued to decline, despite fielding well known candidates in the Ba West and the Nadi Urban constituencies. A closer analysis of the Indo-Fijian communal seats indicate that the NFP support remained steady only in Nadroga and the FLP increased its support among all Indo-Fijian communal seats with the highest swing recorded in Ba West Indian. An average overall gain for the FLP was 6.8 per cent with the NFP reporting a net decline of 7.2 per cent over the 2001 results. The SDL support in the Indo-Fijian communal seat was 2.1 per cent with the highest proportion of votes received for the SDL was 5.3 per cent for the Nadroga Indian communal seat.⁴⁷⁸

In the 2001 general elections, the CAMV and the SVT provided strong competition for SDL in a number of communal seats. However, with the amalgamation of the CAMV with the SDL and the disappearance of SVT from the indigenous Fijian communal scene, the SDL increased its support among the indigenous Fijians from 54.9 per cent in 2001 to 80.3 per cent in 2006. The SDL increased its share of indigenous Fijian votes across the board with highest swing recorded in Cakaudrove West Fijian seat, which was held by CAMV candidate, Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure in the 2001 general elections.

⁴⁷⁸ For an in-depth analysis of the electoral outcome of the 2006 elections see: Sanjay Ramesh, "Preferential Voting and Indo-Fijian Minority Strategy," **Journal of Peace, Conflict and Development**, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp.1-27; also see: The Fiji Times, 20 May 2006.

Nationalist Vanua Tako Lavu Party (NVTLP) and independent indigenous candidates failed to win any seats. In fact, NVLTP's share of indigenous Fijian vote declined from 1.4 per cent in 2001 to 1.1 per cent in 2006.

FLP's partner, PANU, registered a decline from 2.9 per cent in 2001 to 2 per cent in 2006. The SVT did not receive a single indigenous vote because it did not field any indigenous contestants in communal seats in 2006. In 2001, the SVT polled a total of 8.6 per cent of the indigenous Fijian votes. Independent candidates standing in indigenous communal seats increased their share of votes from 2.5 per cent in 2001 to 6.4 per cent in 2006, while the National Alliance Party of Fiji managed to get only 2.5 per cent of indigenous votes.

Fiji's 25 open seats were hotly contested by both the SDL and the FLP. The SVT had only one candidate, Arvind Deo Singh, contesting the Nadi Open seat, which was won by the NFP in 2001 general election. In 2006, the NFP chose to mix and match its preference allocations. In most open seats, like Nadi, it chose independents over the SDL and the FLP while in others its preferences went to the Fijian nationalist party.⁴⁷⁹ The result was that both the SDL and the FLP criticised the NFP for producing a "mixed bag" of preference allocations and the voters too saw the NFP as a "confused" party uncertain about its political allegiance.

The 2006 Fiji general election highlighted that despite a multiracial constitution,

⁴⁷⁹ Fiji Village News, 21 April 2006.

race and ethnicity continued to influence electoral outcome as indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians rallied behind their own communal constituencies. After the election, there were two competing ethnic political blocs: the indigenous Fijian-led SDL and the Indo-Fijian-led FLP. For the SDL, an increase in indigenous votes for the party in the 2006 election was interpreted as a support for government policies instituted after the 2001 election. Among these policies included affirmative action programmes for indigenous Fijians under the Social Justice Act 2001, the RTU, the Qoliqoli and the Indigenous Land Claims Tribunal Bills. On the FLP front, an increase in Indo-Fijian votes indicated a vote of no-confidence by the community in the policies of the SDL.

Realising that there were bitter ethnic divisions, Lasenia Qarase demonstrated better national leadership by offering the FLP significant cabinet portfolios in Agriculture, Energy, Environment, Local Government, Commerce, Health and Mineral Resources. After initially protesting the offer, Chaudhry accepted the Prime Minister's invitation to join a multiparty cabinet. However, in the absence of any rules governing multiparty cabinet, the strategy to include the FLP by the SDL soon came under communal pressure. Prime Minister Qarase wanted the party with most seats in parliament to guide cabinet policy whereas Chaudhry wanted a cabinet split along party lines. Whilst the two leaders were ready to set aside their differences and work together, both fundamentally differed on the operation of the cabinet under a multiparty framework. The army commander welcomed the multiparty cabinet but warned Qarase not to proceed with any of the controversial bills.

Military Intervention of a New Kind

Lead up to the Fourth Coup

The military was concerned over the insistence of the government to continue with the Racial Tolerance and Unity Bill and was further troubled by the alliance between the SDL and former CAMV members which were now operating within the SDL party. There was pressure from the George Speight supporters within the SDL to speed up the implementation of reconciliation legislation and to remove commander Bainimarama, who had become an affront to the indigenous historic bloc established after the 2000 coup. Bainimarama was convinced that the SDL had not changed its policy direction despite implementing multiparty government in accordance with the 1997 Constitution and as such continued with his anti-government activities.⁴⁸⁰

On 13 November 2006, the RFMF came up with a list of demands for the Government of Fiji. In a letter to the Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarase, the army put forward the following demands:

1. Public declaration by the government that the coups of 2000 were illegal, and all those associated with them must be removed from office;
2. Withdrawal of three contentious bills: The Racial Tolerance and Unity Bill, Qoliqoli bill and the Land Claims Tribunal Bill;

⁴⁸⁰ The Fiji Sun 10 October 2006.

3. Investigations against Bainimarama and senior army officers terminated;
4. Police Commissioner Andrew Hughes contract terminated;
5. No foreign intervention under the Biketawa Declaration of 2000;
6. Disband the armed Police Tactical Response Unit;
7. Review the commercial arm of the Native Land Trust Board (NLTB): the Vanua Development Corporation;
8. Ministry of Home Affairs address RFMF concerns about force structure, allowances and promotions; and
9. Government of Fiji to institute good governance.

A chain of events started following Bainimarama's independence day speech where he told the government to step down. Fiji's Police Commissioner, Andrew Hughes, was drawn into the conflict after he refused to release ammunition for the army at the Suva harbour.⁴⁸¹ The Police Commissioner argued that under Schedule 5 of the Fiji Arms and Ammunitions Act, only he has the authority to issue import licenses for any arms importations into Fiji but the military disagreed and argued that there was a 1969 Ordinance that provided exemptions to the armed forces from seeking prior approval from the police. On the morning of 1 November, heavily armed soldiers boarded the Korean vessel and took possession of the ammunitions.

On 31 October, Fiji's Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarase, sought audience with the Vice President of Fiji, Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, and a decision was made to

⁴⁸¹ The Fiji Times, 30 October 2006.

change command at the Queen Elizabeth Barracks at Nabua.⁴⁸² Lieutenant Colonel, Meli Saubulinayau, was summoned to the President's Office with orders to take over as the new commander of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces. However, Colonel Subulinayau declined, stating that he did not have the support of the army. With commander Bainimarama away in the Middle East, Land Forces Commander Pita Driti, Acting Commander Esala Teleni and military spokesperson Major Neumi Leweni expressed deep concerns over government moves to oust Bainimarama during his absence.

On 1 November, Qarase convened a National Security Council meeting, threatening his government's resignation if Bainimarama stayed on. The Police Tactical Squad guarded government buildings as Fiji's Pacific neighbors, Australia and New Zealand, upgraded travel warnings and sent warships and personnel for a possible evacuation of their citizens. Meanwhile, the Fiji Police came out with a press release confirming that investigations had started against Bainimarama for his outbursts against the government. Fiji military commander Frank Bainimarama arrived in the country on 4 November and remained silent over the events that transpired during his absence. The police, nevertheless, continued to press ahead with their investigations.⁴⁸³

With the police waiting to interview Bainimarama, the army lashed out at Australia for getting involved in Fijian affairs after Australian Defence Force chief, Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston, called on Commodore Bainimarama

⁴⁸² Fijilive, 31 October 2006

⁴⁸³ The Fiji Sun, 6 November 2006

not carry out his threat to force the resignation of Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase's government.⁴⁸⁴ In addition, the Fiji military alleged that Australia had covertly sent Special Air Services (SAS) team on 3 November to Fiji to carry out reconnaissance for a possible "invasion."

On 7 November, the military called on the Fiji's Police Commissioner to resign as the political drama unfolding in Suva shifted to the Great Council of Chiefs, which met on 9 November on the request of Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase.

On 8 November, the commander accused Prime Minister Qarase of lying.

According to the army commander:

Let me say that corruption is about lies and in the indigenous context the greatest lie is when it is told by a PM, a talatala [preacher] or a chief for personal gain for the simple reason that these are the three entities that we hold dear and look up to for advice. This was seen in 2000 in parliament when people in positions of leadership in our society lied to the people of this nation that George Speight was correct in all senses of the word when we knew that these were losers and opportunists jostling for positions and money. "We in the RFMF represent the silent majority of this land and say we are tired of being lied to. Stop now or our children and grandchildren will suffer."⁴⁸⁵

The army commander challenged the political hegemony of the SDL and its

⁴⁸⁴ Fijilive, 5 November 2006

⁴⁸⁵ The Fiji Sun, 9 November 2006

chiefly allies and accused them of being co-conspirators in the May 2000 coup. Unlike the 1987 and the 2000 coups, the army commander Bainimarama and his loyal senior officers started a counter-hegemonic non-ethnic movement to displace the indigenous political order, which was based on indigenous political supremacy and the domination of the chiefs. Bainimarama clearly had plans to dismember the indigenous polity. Bainimarama boycotted the first day of the Great Council of Chiefs meeting, arguing that Qarase's move to bring in the chiefs, to resolve the dispute between the military and the government, was a poor judgment on the part of the Prime Minister. On 10 November 2006, Bainimarama addressed the chiefs and expressed personal disappointment with the leadership of Qarase. The two day GCC meeting passed seven resolutions:

The Bose Levu Vakaturaga (GCC) remains committed to supporting at all times the legally elected Government; the Bose Levu Vakaturaga upholds the role of Parliament in its law making process as stipulated in the Constitution; the Bose Levu Vakaturaga upholds the rule of law, respect for democracy as well as customary laws and strongly urges all citizens to respect, abide and protect these at all times; the Bose Levu Vakaturaga urges the two leaders to communicate and resolve their differences; the Bose Levu Vakaturaga has resolved that a committee chaired by the chairperson of the Bose Levu Vakaturaga with three members representing the three confederacies and two advisers to facilitate the mediation process between Government and the military, as part of its term of reference, the committee will study the underlying

causes of the strained relations which have developed between government and the Fiji Military Forces and the projected ultimate results of such serious strained.⁴⁸⁶

The Great Council of Chiefs were protecting and preserving their cultural and political hegemony through the SDL party and such wanted the prevailing political order to survive the challenges from the Fiji military forces. Despite moves by chiefs to broker a peace plan, both the government and the military were unwilling to resolve their differences. The Minister for Home Affairs, Josefa Vosanibola, warned the commander that he was not above the law and should not be making any demands on an elected government.⁴⁸⁷

On 19 November, Bainimarama told Fiji TV that the chiefs in the GCC were involved in the 2000 coup and as a result, they could not be “honest brokers”. The commander further criticized the government for attempting to oust him from office when he was overseas and warned that if the Racial Tolerance and Unity, Qoliqoli, and Lands Claim Tribunal bills were passed then the security situation in Fiji would deteriorate.⁴⁸⁸

On 19 November, Bainimarama questioned the appointment of a psychiatrist, Selina Kuruleca, as an advisor to the special committee of the Great Council of Chiefs.⁴⁸⁹ Bainimarama argued that the psychiatrist was chosen to provide an

⁴⁸⁶ The Fiji Times, 11 November, 2006

⁴⁸⁷ Fijilive, 16 November 2006.

⁴⁸⁸ The Fiji Daily Post, 16 November 2006.

⁴⁸⁹ Fiji Village News, 16 November 2006.

assessment on his mental well-being and declare him unfit to lead the army. On 20 November, Bainimarama gave two weeks notice to the government to acquiesce to his demands, warning that he will “clean up” the government himself.⁴⁹⁰ On 21 November, Bainimarama flew to Auckland to attend the christening of his grand daughter. At Auckland airport, journalists, without success, sought clarification from Bainimarama on his “clean up” announcement.

Back in Fiji, the Police Commissioner Hughes revealed on 23 November 2006 that five senior officers including the commander were likely to be charged with sedition. On the same day, police officers armed with summons confiscated documents, relating to investigations on the army, from the Office of the President.⁴⁹¹ When Bainimarama was informed in New Zealand that the Office of the President was searched by Fiji Police, he condemned the actions, arguing that Police Commissioner, Andrew Hughes, had violated the Office of the President by not following traditional indigenous protocol in executing a search warrant and ordered him out of the country.⁴⁹²

Armed soldiers in full battle gear started patrolling the streets of Suva from 25 November and on 27 November, New Zealand High Commission in Suva closed its office in Suva and moved to Nadi. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs informed its citizens in Fiji to take precautions as fears of a coup

⁴⁹⁰ Fiji TV, 20 November 2006.

⁴⁹¹ Fijilive, 25 November 2006.

⁴⁹² Fijilive, 25 November 2006.

escalated.⁴⁹³

In a bid to thwart a coup, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAT) organized a Forum Foreign Ministers' meeting in Sydney on 1 December 2006. Fiji TV on 27 November reported that Qarase requested assistance from regional Pacific Island States, including Australia and New Zealand, under the Biketawa Declaration of 2000. There was growing nervousness among government members as well as consular officials in Suva after thousand members of the territorial forces were recalled to the army camp.

On 28 November, The Fiji Times reported that an arrest order was out for commander Bainimarama and two Fiji Police Officers went to New Zealand to seek assistance from Interpol on their investigations into the conduct of the Fiji military.⁴⁹⁴ Fiji Village News reported at 10:00 am that Fiji's Police Commissioner had moved his family to Australia and changed residence for security reasons.⁴⁹⁵ Commissioner Hughes told Radio New Zealand that there was real and credible threat from the army barracks to arrest him.⁴⁹⁶ In Fiji, rumors circulated that Bainimarama would place government ministers and the Police Commissioner under house arrest after arriving in Fiji. Feeding the rumors was the apparent breakdown in the progress towards a functioning multiparty cabinet.

⁴⁹³ Fijilive, 27 November 2006.

⁴⁹⁴ The Fiji Times, 28 November 2006.

⁴⁹⁵ Fiji Village News, 28 November 2006.

⁴⁹⁶ The Age, 28 November 2006.

On Wednesday 22 November, four FLP cabinet ministers voted against the 1997 Budget. The FLP leader, Mahendra Chaudhry, had warned earlier that all nine FLP cabinet ministers must be present for the vote. However, five members were granted leave of absence by Prime Minister Qarase. Chaudhry was unhappy after the budget passed with 40 votes in favor against 26. Qarase on Friday 24 November came up with a compromise, which was rejected by Chaudhry. Qarase proposed that he would allow the 4 FLP cabinet ministers to stay provided the FLP did not take disciplinary action against the other five. Adding to the multiparty woes was the outburst by FLP cabinet minister, Lekh Ram Vayeshnoi, who attacked Fiji Police for raiding the President's Office on 23 November. On 28 November, three FLP members, 'Atu Bain, Prem Chand and Vijay Singh and two cabinet ministers, Krishna Datt and Poseci Bune, were expelled from the party.⁴⁹⁷ The fate of three other cabinet ministers, Adi Sivia Qoro, Gyani Nand and Dr Gunasagaran Goundar, were not known.

Oxford academic, Victor Lal, argued that the government should acquiesce to the military's demands and the President take leadership role in resolving the crisis. According to Lal, if there was no consensus between the government and the army, then the President should suspend Parliament for three to six months and seek resolution between the disputing parties with the help of advisors.⁴⁹⁸ The New Zealand Government attempted to broker a peace deal, following private discussions on the security situation in Fiji between New Zealand Minister for Foreign Affairs, Winston Peters, and commander

⁴⁹⁷ The Fiji Daily Post, 29 November 2006

⁴⁹⁸ The Fiji Sun, 28 November 2006

Bainimarama in Wellington. On 28 November, Prime Minister Qarase, Chief Executive Jioji Kotobalavu and Police Commissioner Hughes went to Wellington after Bainimarama agreed to a meeting.⁴⁹⁹ With the diplomatic solution in sight, two Fiji politicians, cabinet minister Lekh Ram Vayeshnoi and opposition leader Mick Beddoes, urged the Fiji Police to drop all investigations against the commander for the sake of political stability in the country. The United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, warned that more than 500 soldiers serving in peace keeping duties in Middle East would be sent home if the commander carried out his threat to oust an elected government in Fiji. The UN chief spoke to Fiji Prime Minister Laisania Qarase on 28 November and refused to take calls from Bainimarama.⁵⁰⁰ The European Union (EU) reaffirmed its support for the Qarase Government as the diplomatic corp in Suva attempted without success to talk to senior army officers at the Queen Elizabeth Barracks.

In New Zealand, Bainimarama remained defiant and told Indo-Fijian Radio Tarana that his meeting with Qarase would be short.⁵⁰¹ New Zealand Prime Minister, Helen Clark, remained optimistic. However, Bainimarama arrived at the meeting late and left early without any clear agreement. The Fiji Times reported that the army would start preparing for a “possible” invasion by Australia by holding military exercises. In a press statement released by military spokesperson Captain Neumi Leweni, the army planned to secure strategic

⁴⁹⁹ The Australian, 28 November 2006

⁵⁰⁰ Fiji TV, 28 November, 2006

⁵⁰¹ New Zealand Herald, 29 November, 2006

sites within the greater Suva area between midnight and 3 am.⁵⁰²

Both Bainimarama and Qarase arrived in Fiji on the evening of 29 November but did not make any comments to the media. The Fiji Police Commissioner, Andrew Hughes, did not return with Qarase and took leave to be with his family in Australia. According to The Sydney Morning Herald, “a high-level source told the Herald that Mr Hughes has suffered acute stress as a result of events in Fiji and will not be returning as commissioner.”⁵⁰³

The Fiji Military on 30 November announced further exercises in Suva following news of an Australian Black Hawk Helicopter crash near Fiji. The Fiji army alleged that the Australian Defence Force was planning an invasion from its navy ships.⁵⁰⁴ At 11:00am, Prime Minister Qarase met with Fiji President and in the afternoon spoke with the Vice President, Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi and the FLP leader Mahendra Chaudhry. At 4.30 pm Fiji time, Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase thanked the New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark, Foreign Minister Winston Peters and Governor General Anand Satyanand for providing support and advice for the meeting between him and the commander in Wellington on Wednesday 29 November. Qarase requested the Fiji Military Forces to provide evidence against individuals involved in the 2000 coup to the police for investigation and further stated that:

⁵⁰² The Fiji Times, 29 November 2006

⁵⁰³ Sydney Morning Herald, 30 November 2006

⁵⁰⁴ Fijilive, 30 November 2006

Starting immediately, the Racial Tolerance and Unity, Qoliqoli and Land Claims Tribunal Bills are suspended. An independent committee will be formed to determine whether any of the bills contravene the 1997 Constitution and if there is any evidence of that then the bills will be removed altogether. Qarase said that his government cannot interfere in ongoing investigations against senior members of the army but stated that the government will support the decision if the DPP and the Police dropped all charges against the army for the sake of national interest. Qarase confirmed that Police Commissioner Andrew Hughes contract was due to expire soon and any decision to renew it will be based on his performance in the past three years. The Commissioner is on leave and is with his family in Australia. The Ministry of Home Affairs will review the armed Police Tactical Unit. The Native Land Trust Board (NLTB) will be directed through the Ministry of Fijian Affairs to review its commercial arm: Vanua Development Corporation. Starting immediately, Qarase will start work on leadership code, freedom of information legislation and anti corruption measures. Two Ministers from the Qarase government, Minister for Tourism, Tomasi Vuetilovoni and Minister for Foreign Affairs Kaliopate Tavola will attend the Forum Meeting in Sydney on 1 December. The two will request the Forum Island Countries (FICs) to support New Zealand brokered dialogue between the Fiji Government and the army. The United Nations Secretary General spoke to Qarase and has promised assistance for peacefully resolving the political impasse in Fiji. PM Qarase will write to Bainimarama and invite him to further talks.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰⁵ Radio Sargam, 30 November 2006

Commander Bainimarama remained unimpressed and in a press conference in Suva on 30 November, the army commander gave the Qarase Government until noon on 1 December 2007 to “clean up” his government. Fiji TV at 10 pm reported that the army was ready to takeover and impose military rule. There were also rumors in Fiji that the army would confiscate business assets of individuals involved in the 2000 coup. New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark and Foreign Minister Winston Peters expressed surprise at Bainimarama’s statements and confirmed that discussions brokered by New Zealand were successful. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Qarase told ABC News that he hoped for “divine intervention” to resolve the crisis as the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, argued that a military coup in Fiji would have a negative impact on the whole of South Pacific region. At 10:00 am, Bainimarama visited the President and held discussions on the current situation for forty minutes and then went to the Post Fiji Stadium where senior army officers were briefed. At 11.30 am, the University of the South Pacific and number of businesses closed for the day in the Suva City Business District.⁵⁰⁶

On 4 December, armed soldiers went to the Police Tactical Response units in Nasinu and Nasova and removed weapons from the police armory. Land Forces Commander, Pita Driti, confirmed that weapons in possession of police were removed so that they could not pose a threat to the military.⁵⁰⁷ Meanwhile, some thirty armed soldiers set up a military roadblock at Sawani near the Naitasiri province. At the checkpoint, soldiers disarmed Prime Minister’s

⁵⁰⁶ Legend FM, 1 December 2006.

⁵⁰⁷ Fijilive, 4 December 2006.

bodyguards. From 3.30 pm, The Fiji Daily Post closed its head office in Suva after reports that it was one of the “targets” in the army’s “clean up” campaigns.⁵⁰⁸ At night, armed soldiers set up roadblocks throughout Suva and in the west. Prime Minister Qarase’s residence was surrounded and he was not allowed by soldiers to see the Vice President. In the morning of 5 December, the military tightened its grip on Suva city and confiscated official vehicles of Fiji government ministers.

On 5 December 2006, Commander Bainimarama assumed executive authority and established a Military Council to run the affairs of the country with the assistance of interim Prime Minister Dr Jona Baravilala Senilagakali. According to Fijilive:

Bainimarama said he had stepped into the shoes of the President and in this capacity under Section 101 (1) of our Constitution as he (the President) is empowered to do so, dismissed Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase. He said the 1997 Constitution remained intact. [The army commander further stated that]:

We reiterate that while this cause of action is taken with great reluctance, it is necessary to steer our beloved nation into peace, stability and just solution and to preserve our Constitution. Therefore the constitution will remain in place except those parts as necessitated under the doctrine of necessity.

⁵⁰⁸ The Fiji Daily Post, 4 December 2006.

And medical practitioner and former army doctor Dr Jona Senilagakali has been appointed caretaker Prime Minister. Bainimarama said the takeover will not be permanent.⁵⁰⁹

The 2006 Coup

The 2006 coup was unlike previous coups. Bainimarama's counter-hegemony against the SDL party and the chiefs of Fiji was based on a non-ethnicist ideology. The military ousted the government because it was racist and wanted to bring in legislation to pardon individuals involved in the 2000 coup. The 2006 coup saw the dismantling of the chief-led historic bloc that continued since independence, interrupted only in 1987 and 1999 by the FLP-led counter-hegemony. Indigenous institutions that entrenched chiefly cultural and political hegemony were targeted by the military including the NLTB, the Fijian Affairs, the Fijian Holdings and the Great Council of Chiefs. Moreover, provincial councils were audited and individuals suspected of corruption were promptly removed from office. Bainimarama had transformed the Republic of Fiji Military Forces from an ethnic institution to an agent of political and social change.

On the evening of 5 December, The Fiji Times and the Fiji TV were warned not to publish any messages from the deposed Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase or any of his ministers. The Fiji Broadcasting Limited (FBCL), that operates Radio Fiji stations, including Radio Fiji One, Radio Fiji Two, Radio Fiji Gold and Radio Mirchi, had their evening news content checked and cleared by the army. On 6

⁵⁰⁹ Fijilive, 5 December, 2006

December, The Fiji Daily Post reported that the military was preparing to publish martial law decrees and on the same morning Prime Minister Qarase and his family were flown from his official residence in Suva to his home in Lau.

The Great Council of Chiefs Chairman, Ratu Ovini Bokini, confirmed that the Council meeting scheduled for 12 to 14 December was postponed due to the military takeover. Chairman Bokini stated that President Iloilo was still the head of state, even though Bainimarama had assumed the powers of the President. Meanwhile, the speaker of Fiji's House of Representatives, Pita Nacuva, revealed that he had received no directive from the President on the dissolution of parliament and as far as he was concerned, it was "business as usual".⁵¹⁰

At about midday on 6 December, armed soldiers surrounded Fiji's parliament and detained Pita Nacuva. Also taken into custody by the army were Solicitor General Nainendra Nand, Public Service Commission Chairman Stuart Huggett and Acting Police Commissioner Moses Driver. The Senate was adjourned indefinitely.⁵¹¹ The army declared a state of emergency and Bainimarama ordered all soldiers to march into camp so they could be deployed at various strategic locations throughout Fiji. Commodore Bainimarama said the primary objective of the Interim Military Government was to "take the country forward towards good governance, rid Fiji of corruption and bad practices and at the same time, promote the well being of Fiji and its people at the earliest possible

⁵¹⁰ Legend FM, 6 December 2006

⁵¹¹ AAP, 6 December 2006

opportunity."⁵¹²

Commander Bainimarama announced on 7 December that a Commission of Inquiry would be set up to investigate allegations of corruption against the SDL Government. Meanwhile, Suva lawyer Richard Naidu argued that the military needed to have “effective” control for the coup to be successful. Academic Brij Lal questioned the basis for invoking the “doctrine of necessity” and highlighted the events of 1987 where Colonel Rabuka deposed the Bavadra Government and abrogated the constitution, establishing effective control over the country.⁵¹³ The FLP leader Mahendra Chaudhry suggested that the army handover power to the President of Fiji as soon as possible and that he was ready to assist in restoring democracy. Besides the Labour leader, former GCC chairman, Ratu Epeli Ganilau, requested that the people of Fiji move on and work with the army in restoring democracy.

On 8 December 2006, the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CAMG) unanimously condemned the military coup and suspended Fiji’s membership. According to a Commonwealth communiqué, the group requested Commonwealth Secretary-General Don McKinnon to “deploy his good offices as appropriate and in consultation with the Chairperson of CMAG (Malta’s Foreign Minister Michael Frendo), including the possibility of a mission to Fiji Islands to press for the immediate restoration of democracy”.⁵¹⁴ Military

⁵¹² Fijilive, 6 December 2006

⁵¹³ Fiji TV, 7 December 2006

⁵¹⁴ Commonwealth Secretariat, 8 December 2006

spokesperson, Neumi Leweni, stated that the expulsion of Fiji was expected and the army was working to hand over power to the people as soon as possible.

Former coup leader Sitiveni Rabuka gave an interview on Fiji TV's In-depth Report edition where he criticized deposed Prime Minister Qarase and Vice President for failing to resolve the impasse between the military and the government. According to Rabuka, Iloilo had the authority to sack the Prime Minister. He further stated that Vice President, Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, should have acted earlier and provided legal advice to President Iloilo before the situation got out of control. Rabuka clarified that he neither supports nor opposes the takeover by the army.⁵¹⁵

The Fijilive website reported on 14 December that the SDL had published a strategy paper to seek support from the public for a return to democracy. The paper said the military's actions were unpopular and they would become costly and untenable the longer the crisis dragged on. The paper also talked about the SDL retaining the "moral high ground" by steering clear of any unpopular acts and by disassociating the party from any despicable act committed by the military's "hit squads". SDL backbencher Mere Samisoni, who owns the Hot Bread Kitchen chain of shops, admitted to Pacific News (PACNEWS) that the document was the work of several party caucus members but noted that it was

⁵¹⁵ Fiji TV News, 13 December 2006

leaked to the military by a party member.⁵¹⁶

Tensions between the Military and the GCC

Besides removing a number of SDL appointees from various statutory bodies and suspending individuals who disagreed with the objectives of the coup, the military challenged the political hegemony of the chiefs leading to its suspension in April 2007.

The Great Council of Chiefs (GCC) met on 20 December amid reports that Vice President, Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, would hand in his resignation because of his opposition to the coup. The GCC Chairman, Ratu Ovini Bokini, advised the chiefs to find a resolution to the political crisis. The army Commander Frank Bainimarama, the deposed Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase and the President of Fiji Ratu Josefa Iloilo were not present at the meeting.⁵¹⁷ Fiji TV reported in its late news that the chiefs were discussing immunity for the military and that there was a general consensus within the Council on democracy and the rule of law. Ousted Fijian Affairs Chief Executive Adi Litia stated that the GCC was saddened that peaceful and lawful avenues of resolving the impasse between the Government and the RFMF were not satisfactorily explored before the military takeover.

Just like in 2000, the GCC failed to come to an agreement on 21 December

⁵¹⁶ The Fiji Times, 14 December 2006

⁵¹⁷ Legend FM, 20 December 2006

after three indigenous confederacies split into rival factions. Two confederacies, Burebasaga and Kubuna, wanted the President and the Vice President to remain in their positions, an interim government formed and immunity from prosecution granted to the military. Tovata confederacy, however, was split on the issue. Leader of the Fiji's Third Infantry Regiment, Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba and son of former President Ratu Mara had heated exchange with another chief Ratu Sakuia Matuku over the political crisis in Fiji. Army spokesperson, Neumi Leweni, in a press interview stated that the GCC meeting was irrelevant and that the army would continue with its "clean up". Nevertheless, the GCC meeting continued on 22 December.

Commander Bainimarama speaking on a Fijian talkback show on Viti FM stated that the people of Fiji should accept the fact that the military was now in power and there would be no turning back. The commander lashed out at the GCC and warned that if the GCC was not prepared to accept the new political order for Fiji then the army would rule for the next fifty years. The commander argued that the GCC was compromised, because at least two senior members, Ratu Ovini Bokini and Adi Litia Qionibaravi were supporters of ousted Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase.⁵¹⁸

On 22 December, the GCC reached a consensus. According to the GCC, the Council still considered President Ratu Josefa Iloilo and Vice President Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi to be the lawfully appointed executive authority of Fiji; ousted

⁵¹⁸ Viti FM, 22 December 2006.

Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase to hand in his resignation to the President, who will then establish a privy council to appoint an interim government of national unity; the RFMF to return to the barracks and hand over authority to the President. At a press conference, ousted Fijian Affairs Board CEO Adi Litia Qionibaravi revealed that the GCC resolutions would first be conveyed to the army commander Commodore Frank Bainimarama before being made public.⁵¹⁹ However, Bainimarama was not convinced by the resolutions of the GCC. He saw the resolutions as an attempt to undermine his authority and impose the hegemony of the chiefs. In a move considered “revolutionary”, the commander banned the GCC from holding any further meetings.

Nevertheless, despite the ban, the commander went back to the GCC in April 2007 to get the endorsement of a new Vice President, interim Foreign Affairs Minister Ratu Epeli Nailatikau. However, the GCC refused to acquiesce to the commander’s wishes as the President of Fiji on 18 April 2007 promulgated an extraordinary decree, which terminated the GCC.

The composition of the GCC was determined under the Fijian Affairs Act and the Council was given the role of nominating the President under the 1997 Constitution. Former Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka was a life member of the Council. In an extraordinary Government Gazette, the interim administration stated any other person appointed or holding any post pursuant to the Fijian Affairs (Great Council of Chiefs) Regulations 1993 ceased to hold such

⁵¹⁹ Fiji Village News, 22 December 2006

appointment or post. The interim Minister of Fijian Affairs, Heritage, Provincial Development and Multi Ethnic Affairs Ratu Epeli Ganilau exercised his powers under the Fijian Affairs Act and initiated the Fijian Affairs (Great Council of Chiefs) suspension Regulations of 2007, which came into effect from 13 April, 2007.

Dissent against the commander and the interim government was not restricted to the GCC, anti-hegemonic groups, including members and supporters of the SDL party and human rights campaigners protested against the military coup.

Anti-Coup Protests and Human Rights

Following the coup, a number of groups, some sympathetic to the deposed government, protested against the military takeover. The military, in response, arrested and detained a number of individuals, resulting in condemnation from human rights organisations. Fiji's Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF) condemned the actions of the military in intimidating members of the public who spoke against the military regime. CCF President, Reverend Aquila Yabaki stated that while the CCF deplored the mistreatment as unnecessary, protesters should be attuned to the fact that there has been a military takeover and it was not business as usual. Joining the CCF was Pacific Resource Concerns Centre Director Tupou Vere, who called for a full return to the rule of law.⁵²⁰

⁵²⁰ Fiji Village News, 29 December 2006.

The army continued to detain pro-democracy group and banned Virisila Buadromo, Imraz Iqbal, Laisa Digitaki, Pita Waqavonovono and Jacqueline Koroi from leaving the country.⁵²¹ The deposed Fijian Affairs Board chief executive, Adi Litia Qionibaravi was taken in for questioning by the military on 29 December but was released on 30 December.

Detentions and physical abuse of critics of the military created concerns for a number of international human rights organisations. Amnesty International on 16 February 2007 urged the interim government of Fiji to comply with its obligations under international human rights law. According to the Amnesty report:

Amnesty International is highly concerned over President Ratu Josefa Iloilo Uluivuda's announcement on 18 January 2007 of a decree, known as the Immunity (Fiji Military Government Intervention) Promulgation 2007, which granted "full and unconditional immunity from all criminal or civil or legal or military disciplinary or professional proceedings or consequences" to the Disciplined Forces in the country who were involved in the coup and all other persons who acted under their command, in the run-up to 5 December 2006 until 5 January 2007, the day after President Uluivuda resumed executive authority over the interim government. Despite repeated assurances by the Interim Attorney-General Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum that the Fiji Human Rights Commission would

⁵²¹ Fiji TV, 29 December 2006

handle complaints of human rights violations with the government's full support, the fact that the persons covered by the above decree cannot be held accountable for any human rights violations that they may have committed seriously jeopardises the state of human rights and the rule of law in Fiji. This decree entrenches the legacy of impunity experienced in Fiji in recent times.⁵²²

The Interim Attorney-General Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum on 18 February urged the Amnesty International to understand why President, Ratu Josefa Iloilo granted immunity to soldiers of the Fiji Military Forces. At a press conference, Sayed-Khaiyum argued that:

In respect of Amnesty International's interpretation of the Immunity Promulgation 2007, promulgated by the President Ratu Josefa, we cannot comment on this matter as there are a couple of issues before the courts, he said. I would, however, recommend Amnesty International to read and digest the preamble to the Promulgation since the President sets out the reasons for the promulgation and the specificities of the situation in Fiji prior to December 5, 2006, before January 4, 2007 and after January 4, 2007, said Mr Sayed-Khaiyum.⁵²³

Not only Amnesty International but the Eminent Persons Group (EPG), formed by the Forum Secretariat in response to the coup, in a report requested that the

⁵²² "Fiji Human Rights must be upheld," Amnesty International, 16 February 2007.

⁵²³ The Fiji Times, 19 February 2007.

interim Prime Minister resign from his position and soldiers return to the barracks as soon as possible. The EPG recommended that democratic elections take place within eighteen to twenty four months and all human rights abuses to cease.⁵²⁴

The Fiji Human Rights Commission and the indigenous Fijian arm of the Fiji Labour Party dismissed the EPG report, arguing that the Group was out of touch with the political realities of Fiji and reiterated that it may take five years to complete the proposed “clean up”. Despite counter-argument in support of the military-backed interim government, death in custody of a teenager triggered another round of international condemnation.

The relatives of the teenager, Sakiusa Rabaka Ligaiviu, allege that he was arrested by the military on 28 January 2007 for possessing marijuana and beaten while in custody and as a result sustained serious head injuries from which he later died.⁵²⁵ Sakauisa’s mother, Alanieta Rabka, told The Fiji Times that:

He underwent surgery on his head February 16 and returned home a week later. She said since the assault, her son had not been feeling well. She said on Saturday evening [24 February] while talking to friends at his home, he collapsed. Relatives and friends tried to revive the youth as they waited for an ambulance to

⁵²⁴ Fiji TV News, 19 February 2007; also see: Fijilive, 20 February 2007.

⁵²⁵ Fijilive, 25 February 2007.

transport him to Nadi Hospital. About half an hour after arriving at Nadi Hospital, Mr Ligaiviu's parents were informed of his death.⁵²⁶

Concerned by ongoing human rights violations, New Zealand Prime Minister, Helen Clark, approached the United Nations in a bid to stop the international body from employing Fijian soldiers in peace keeping missions overseas. Australia on the other hand pressured the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Union to suspend assistance programmes for Fiji and at the Forum Meeting in Vanuatu, in March 2007, both countries established a united front in their condemnation of the interim government in Fiji.

Besides detentions and human rights violations of protestors, the military sought assistance from Australian fraud Peter Foster to expose corruption in the SDL government. It was alleged that Peter Foster had worked with the SDL party members during the 2006 election.

Allegations of Corruption

One of the reasons for overthrowing the Qarase government in December 2006 was corruption. According to the military, the SDL government had engaged in corrupt practices and had sought assistance from suspicious individuals in influencing the outcome of the 2006 election. One such individual Peter Foster, a wanted fraud in Australia, was allegedly involved with the deposed

⁵²⁶ The Fiji Times, 26 February 2007.

government. After the coup, Foster became military's informer and secretly video taped conversations between himself and a senior SDL member.

According to Fijilive:

In a video footage from its covert 'Operation Free Fiji' between December 17- 24, 2006, the military shows what appears to be SDL election candidates committee chairman Navitalai Naisoro in conversation with international fraudster Peter Foster, admitting that the party rigged the 2006 General Election to ensure a win for the party. Naisoro, who was chairman of the SDL candidates' selection and strategy committee, admits in the concealed video that extra ballot papers were used to win the marginal urban seats during the May elections.⁵²⁷

According to the *Fiji Sun*:

The transcripts also noted how money was paid out to some deposed Cabinet ministers for helping Foster in his quest to set up business in the country. It is alleged that Foster was billed \$80,000 by Mr Baba's consultancy to engage the services of Cabinet ministers and other prominent figures. It is alleged that the Tui Cakau and deposed Lands Minister Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu was paid \$3500 for boat tickets. In a conversation between Foster and Mr Baba, Mr Baba told Foster that money was spent to host

⁵²⁷ Fijilive, 1 January 2007

deposed Public Utilities Minister Robin Irwin, Attorney-General Qoriniasi Bale, Information Minister Isireli Leweniqila, Multi-Ethnic Minister Ratu Meli Saukuru, Senator Dr Tupeni Baba and former Labour Minister Kenneth Zinck to lunches and dinners which amounted to over \$3400. Furthermore, Foster paid \$19,000 to nine Cabinet ministers and they knew where the money came from. Foster is understood to have said that each of the nine ministers were given \$2000 to pay their constituency contribution fees because they were all behind and if it were not paid they would not get elected and would not get to Cabinet otherwise.⁵²⁸

SDL strategist Navitalai Naisoro refuted allegations that Australian fraud Peter Foster bank-rolled the SDL campaign for the May 2006 election but confirmed that Foster had offered to assist the party financially. Former SDL party secretary Jale Bale threatened to take legal action against Foster for his alleged “lies”. Meanwhile, deposed Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarase, refuted the video tape evidence as “suspect.”⁵²⁹

Evidence against the SDL party was obtained after the military used a hidden camera to record conversations between Peter Foster and SDL strategist Navitalai Naisoro. While the SDL supporters questioned military’s method in obtaining “evidence” against the deposed SDL government, plans moved ahead to hand over executive authority to the President of Fiji.

⁵²⁸ The Fiji Sun, 2 January, 2007.

⁵²⁹ Fijilive, 3 January 2007.

The Interim Government

After the December 2006 takeover, the military assumed executive authority but following protests from the international community and human rights groups, the military handed power to the President in January 2007. On 4 January 2007, the army Commander Frank Bainimarama handed executive authority back to the President of Fiji Ratu Josefa Iloilo, who accepted the commander's decision and thanked the army for saving the nation from the catastrophe under the SDL government. The President's Office confirmed that the commander and his soldiers would be given immunity and an interim government would be set up with the commander possibly appointed as the interim Prime Minister on 5 January 2007.⁵³⁰

The Fiji Times reported that the Fiji Retailers Association (FRA) and the Fiji Labour Party welcomed the move by the army to hand back power to the President while the Christian Mission Fellowship, an arm of the Methodist Church, condemned the President for being a "puppet of the military."⁵³¹

Deposed Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase expressed concern that the President on 5 December had refused to accept the military takeover and by 4 January, it seemed to have changed his position.⁵³² The President supported the military action and accepted that the SDL government was corrupt and racist and had plans to provide amnesty to many in the party suspected of supporting the

⁵³⁰ Fijilive, 4 January 2007

⁵³¹ The Fiji Times, 4 January 2007

⁵³² Fiji TV, 4 January 2007.

George Speight coup of 19 May 2000.

On 5 January 2007, commander Bainimarama was sworn in as the interim Prime Minister of Fiji by the President. The commander made the following pledge while accepting the interim Prime Minister's position:

1. To continue to uphold the Constitution;
2. Where necessary facilitate all legal protection and immunity, both criminal and civil, to the Commander, Officers and all members of the RFMF;
3. Give effect to the actions of the RFMF including the respective suspensions, dismissals and temporary removal from office of civil servants, CEO's, those appointed by the Judicial Services and Constitutional Services Commissions, the Judiciary and Government appointed Board members;
4. Steady our economy through sustained economic growth and correct the economic mismanagement of the past 6 years;
5. Lift up the living standards of the growing poor and underprivileged of our country;
6. Restructure the NLTB to ensure more benefits flow to the ordinary indigenous Fijians;
7. Eradicate systematic corruption by including the setting up of an anti-corruption unit through the Attorney General's Office and set new standards of Governmental and institutional transparency;
8. Improve our relations with our neighbors and the international community;
9. Take our country to democratic elections after an advanced electoral office and systems are in place and the political and economic conditions are conducive to the holding of such elections;

10. Immediately as practicable introduce a Code of Conduct and Freedom of Information provisions; and

11. Give paramountcy to national security and the territorial integrity of Fiji.⁵³³

On 8 January 2007, interim ministers were sworn in by the President of Fiji.

Poseci Bune was sworn in as the interim Minister for Public Service and Public Service Reforms; Ratu Epeli Ganilau, interim Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade; Manu Korovulavula, interim Minister for Transport; Netani Sukanaivalu, a former navy officer and businessman, interim Minister for Education; Dr Jona Senilagakali, interim Minister for Health; Fiji Chamber of Commerce President Taito Waradi, interim Minister for Commerce; Suva lawyer Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, interim Minister for Justice and former Senator Laufitu Malani, interim Minister for Women and Social Welfare.⁵³⁴ Fiji's largest Hindu organization, Shri Sanatan Dharam Pratinidhi Sabha, and the Fiji Labour Party welcomed the new interim ministerial line up.⁵³⁵

The Fiji Labour Party Mahendra Chaudhry was sworn in as the interim Minister for Finance on 9 January. Other interim Ministers offered positions were: Fiji Labour Party member Lekh Ram Vayeshnoi, interim Minister for Youth and Sports; Bernadette Rounds-Ganilau, interim Minister for Labour, Industrial Relations and Environment; Tevita Vuibau, interim Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources; Jainen Kumar, interim Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries

⁵³³ RFMF Press Release, 5 January 2007.

⁵³⁴ Fijilive, 8 January 2007.

⁵³⁵ Fiji Village News, 8 January 2007.

and Forestry; and Ratu Jone Navakamocea, interim Minister for Local Government and Urban Development.⁵³⁶

The National Federation Party (NFP), which was defeated in the 2006 election, criticised Chaudhry for accepting the position of interim Finance Minister in the military-backed interim government. Joining the NFP was the UPP President Mick Beddoes, who claimed that the FLP's participation as well as the participation of members of the National Alliance Party of Fiji in the interim government raised suspicion of their complicity in the December coup. Beddoes was warned by the army on 7 December to refrain from making any further statements against the interim government.⁵³⁷

On Fiji TV, the FLP leader defended his decision to join the interim government and further confirmed that he would continue in politics against Bainimarama's undertaking that interim ministers cannot participate in any future elections.⁵³⁸ The involvement of the FLP and the NAPF in the interim government provided ammunition to the SDL supporters, who argued that commander Bainimarama was influenced by opposition parties to depose an elected government. In response, the NAPF leader, Ratu Epeli Ganilau and the leader of the Fiji Labour Party, Mahendra Chaudhry, rejected suggestions that they were involved in the December takeover.

⁵³⁶ Fijilive, 9 January 2007; also see The Fiji Times, 9 January 2007.

⁵³⁷ The Fiji Times, 9 January 2007; also see: The Herald Tribune, 9 January 2007.

⁵³⁸ Fiji TV News, 9 January 2007.

The Great Council of Chiefs, which opposed the December coup, accepted the interim government and called on to the people of Fiji and the SDL party to work with the military administration to move the country forward. Another major indigenous Fijian institution, the Methodist Church of Fiji, threw its support behind the interim government but privately expressed concern that the interim line-up had individuals who wanted to dismantle affirmative action programmes for indigenous Fijians. The Fiji Law Society accepted the appointment of the interim government of Fiji by the President. The Fiji Law Society had earlier criticised the 5 December coup and wanted to test the validity of the 1997 Constitution in the court.⁵³⁹

The interim government met on 16 January amid tight security. Fiji TV reported that the interim ministers came to the cabinet meeting with armed bodyguards. At the meeting an alternative budget for the year 2007 was discussed by the interim Minister for Finance Mahendra Chaudhry, who invited employer organisations, companies, civil societies, unions and key stakeholders to provide written submissions for consideration in the formulation of the new budget. The cabinet also decided to restructure the Government Supplies Department and resolved to continue discussions with the Emperor Gold Mines over the proposed closure of the company.

Despite handing over authority to the President and interim government, human rights campaigners remained concerned about the dual role of

⁵³⁹ The Fiji Sun, 12 January 2007.

commander Bainimarama and influences from the military. Some of these concerns were raised with the Fiji delegation at the Vanuatu and Tonga Forum meetings.

Forum Meetings

The March 2007 Forum meeting in Vanuatu was dominated by Australia and New Zealand, which spearheaded a number of initiatives for a speedy return to democratic rule in Fiji. At the Forum Ministers meeting, the Fiji delegation agreed to hold general elections within two years.⁵⁴⁰

The interim Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, and the interim Minister for Justice, Aiyaz Khaiyum, did not comment to media upon their arrival from the Forum meeting, fearing further protests against the interim-government. Meanwhile, Radio Australia reported that:

Fiji's Interim Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, told the Foreign Affairs Ministers' meeting in Vanuatu on Friday that his government accepted a recommendation made by the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) that Fiji hold elections within two years. In response, the Forum Ministers agreed that if Fiji was serious about the commitment the forum, on behalf of its members, would open diplomatic channels with the establishment of a joint working

⁵⁴⁰ Fiji Village News, 17 March 2007.

group.⁵⁴¹

One of the demands of the EPG was that Fiji return power to a civilian authority as soon as possible. It was alleged by the group that army commander Bainimarama had rejected this demand, arguing that a civilian authority would delay the proposed “clean up”.

Opposition to the interim-government continued at the Forum Meeting in Tonga in October 2007. Unlike the March meeting in Vanuatu, this one was marred by controversy. Australia and New Zealand attempted, without success, to pressure the Government of Tonga to sanction the interim Prime Minister of Fiji, Frank Bainimarama, by withholding his invitation to the meeting.

At the Forum Islands Meeting in Tonga on 18 October, Bainimarama promised Forum leaders to hold free and fair elections in less than 18 months and further clarified that he would not stand for elections. In response, Australia, New Zealand and the European Union agreed to assist Fiji to draw up new electoral rolls.⁵⁴²

Australia and New Zealand remained uncommitted on removing sanctions against Fiji. Speaking at a press conference on 18 October 2007, Australian Foreign Affairs Minister, Alexander Downer, welcomed the commitment made by Fiji. However, Downer made it clear that the commander’s undertaking did

⁵⁴¹ The Fiji Daily Post, 18 March 2007.

⁵⁴² The Sydney Morning Herald, 18 October 2007.

not guarantee the lifting of sanctions. Australia's position was that as the roadmap unfolds, and assuming it was consistent with the objectives of the Forum, Australia would consider winding back some of the measures.

According to Alexander Downer: "To use a famous phrase, our lifting of sanctions will be conditions-based not time-based. And I don't know what the conditions will be by the end of January [2008] when the Foreign Ministers meet. Indeed I hope to be at the meeting myself."⁵⁴³

The Peoples' Charter

Despite having an understanding on general elections with regional governments and major aid donors, commander Bainimarama insisted on implementing the Peoples' Charter for Change, which was drafted by Indo-Fijian John Samy and released to the public for discussion in April 2007. The Charter is a central component in Bainimarama's de-ethnicisation strategy. According to the Charter, "Fiji has been suffering from deep-rooted structural problems, a governance environment severely warped by the dominance of parochial ethnic politics and with an increasing incidence of corruption and lawlessness."⁵⁴⁴

The Charter recommends that "Fiji needs to become a more progressive and a truly democratic nation; a country in which its leaders, at all levels, emphasize national unity, racial harmony and the social and economic advancement of all

⁵⁴³ PACNEWS, 18 October 2007.

⁵⁴⁴ "Building a Better Fiji for All, "Ministry of Information, Suva, April 2007.

communities regardless of race or ethnic origin”⁵⁴⁵ and as such “commits unequivocally to bringing together all key stakeholders in the public realm with a view to ensuring and enhancing the capacity for the national interest to be paramount, i.e. one that supersedes communal divisions and ethnic and sectional interests.”⁵⁴⁶

On 11 September 2007, the interim government confirmed that it received a total of 95 submissions on the proposed “Building a better Fiji for all through a People’s Charter for Change and Progress”. A total of 15 Provincial Councils have made formal submissions, at least six of them are against the move while nine support efforts to build a multiracial and united Fiji.⁵⁴⁷ According to the commander, the Peoples’ Charter for Change will become part of Fiji’s Constitution and he will remove any new government from power if they adopt racial policies.⁵⁴⁸

The 45-member National Council for Building a Better Fiji (NCBBF) met at the Raffles Tradewinds Hotel in Lami, Suva on 16 January 2008. Among those present at the meeting at the Raffles Tradewinds Hotel in Lami were eight Cabinet ministers and interim Prime Minister Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama, who co-chaired the council. Also present was the Fiji Labour Party President Jokapeci Koroi, who confirmed her membership on the 45-

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ Fijilive, 11 September 2007.

⁵⁴⁸ The Fiji Times, 20 October 2007.

member council.⁵⁴⁹ There were also a number of groups which refused to participate, including the SDL president Kalokalo Loki, NFP president Raman Pratap Singh, Fiji Islands Council of Trade Unions president Maika Namudu, Fiji Chinese Association president Lionel Yee, National Council of Women Fiji president Miriama Leweniqila, Methodist Church president Reverend Laisiasa Ratabacaca, Fiji Council of Churches chairman Reverend Tuikilaikila Waqairatu, TISI Sangam president Dorsami Naidu and Fiji Muslim League president Hafiz Khan.

Bainimarama also approached the ousted Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase but he declined, arguing that any initiative for better race relations in Fiji should come from an elected government. Besides the deposed Prime Minister, Human rights campaigner, Angie Heffernan, labeled the process as a “waste of taxpayer’s money” and an “insult to the citizens of Fiji.”⁵⁵⁰

Commander Bainimarama is facing resistance to the proposed Charter from the Methodist Church, 6 indigenous provinces,⁵⁵¹ members of the deposed

⁵⁴⁹ Participants in the Council include former Opposition Leader Mick Beddoes, Fiji Trade Union Congress President Daniel Urai, Ratu Jo Nawalowalo, chairman of the Kadavu Provincial Council, Ratu Jolame Lewanavanua (Lomaiviti), Jo Serulagilagi (Tailevu), Atunaisa Lacabuka (Serua), Teatu Rewi (Rabi), Taterani Rigamoto (Rotuma), Ratu Meli Bolobolo (Ra), Ratu Filimone Ralogaivau (Bua), Kamlesh Arya, President Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, Diwan Chand Maharaj, President Sanatan Pratinidhi Sabha, Lorine Tevi (Fiji Council of Social Services), Selina Leewai (Labasa Town civil servant), Daryl Tarte (Fiji Media Council), Desmond Whiteside (businessman), Peni Moore, Reverend Akuila Yabaki (Citizen Constitutional Forum), Nasinu Town Mayor Rajendra Kumar and Fiji Visitors Bureau chairman Pat Wong (Fijilive, 16 January 2008).

⁵⁵⁰ The Fiji Times, 18 January 2008.

⁵⁵¹ Indigenous Fijian provinces of Rewa, Naitasiri, Ba, Ra, Lomaiviti and

SDL government and the Great Council of Chiefs. Moreover, there are growing concerns among indigenous landowners after a report by the Sugarcane Production, Research and Management Services recommended de-reserving indigenous land and making it available for commercial farming.⁵⁵² Groups opposed to the Charter and the de-reserving proposals have formed an anti-hegemonic bloc and are openly opposing any political initiatives from the commander or the interim government.

Besides implementing a strategy for a non-racial Fiji, the army commander had by the end of 2007 removed the GCC from politics after 132 years of political domination. Bainimarama also started to audit the accounts of all 14 indigenous Provincial Councils and reiterated that the GCC and the Provinces were now part of his “clean up”. With the guns on his side, Bainimarama had started to transform indigenous Fijian society in unprecedented ways. However, the military counter-hegemony had not brought about the promised political and economic stability. The anti-military position of powerful indigenous chiefs and the indigenous elite continued to play a significant role in influencing indigenous grassroots. In addition, a proposal to de-reserve indigenous land has been seen by indigenous landowners as a plot by Indo-Fijian leaders in the interim-government to usurp land for the benefit of Indo-Fijian farmers. As a result, race relations in post-coup Fiji have once again been placed under

Nadroga do not support the Peoples Charter for Change.

⁵⁵² Dr. Krishnamurthi, “Rehabilitaion of the Fijian Sugar Industry, Development of By-Products and Improvements of the Standard of Living for the Farmers,” Sugarcane Production, Research and Management Services, 27 November 2007, pp.1-12; also see: Fijilive, 16 February 2008.

considerable strain. There are two opposing forces in play in Fiji. The indigenous bloc opposed to the 2006 coup is actively working towards re-enforcing ethnic hierarchies whereas the military and the interim-government are working towards a non-racial polity. Both these forces are heading for a political collision as Fiji continues with the cycle of control, resistance and coups.

Conclusion

I have shown in this Chapter that Fiji's military commander, Frank Bainimarama, transformed the army into a resistance movement against the indigenous political establishment, following the events of 2000. Initially, the commander supported the affirmative action programs of the military-backed interim government after the 2000 coup. However, following a mutiny in November 2000, the commander started to question indigenous nationalists who supported the events of 2000.

In August 2001, the indigenous SDL party won the general election and formed a coalition government with the CAMV, which was led by supporters of the Speight coup. From 2003, the commander started to openly criticise the SDL coalition government, which unsuccessfully tried to replace the commander. Criticisms by the military continued unabated as the government intervened to support chiefs convicted for their role in the 2000 coup. By June 2005, the SDL proposed a Racial Tolerance and Unity Bill to provide amnesty to indigenous

Fijians accused of participating in the 2000 coup and before the 2006 election, SDL's coalition partner, the CAMV, was disbanded and its members absorbed into the SDL. These developments intensified the conflict between the military and the government.

Following a racially divisive 2006 general election, Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase attempted without success to counter the growing resistance from the military to his policies by forming a multiparty cabinet with the FLP. However, without a ground rule for multiparty governance in place, the multiparty cabinet became dysfunctional as political leaders attempted to influence cabinet decisions along party lines. In the middle of the multiparty governance crisis, Laisenia Qarase re-introduced the Racial Tolerance and Unity Bill, resulting in a military coup in December 2006. The commander of the Fiji Military Forces, Frank Bainimarama, justified the military intervention on grounds that the SDL was corrupt, racist and introduced policies that would have led to lawlessness. The most salient feature of the coup was attempts by the military regime to de-ethnicise Fiji's politics.

After the coup, the commander assumed executive authority but by January 2007, he handed power back to the President, Ratu Josefa Iloilo, who appointed a multi-ethnic interim government. However, various entrenched indigenous interests, including the members of the deposed government, the Great Council of Chiefs, and the Methodist Church challenged Bainimarama and refused to cooperate with the interim government for a multiracial Fiji.

The deposed SDL government challenged the army commander's actions in court, and the international community, including regional powers Australia and New Zealand, imposed economic sanctions on Fiji and pressured the interim government for a quick return to democratic rule. In the face of mounting pressure, military commander, Bainimarama, agreed to hold elections by March 2009 but for the military, elections in Fiji were only possible if the Peoples' Charter, based on multiethnic collaboration, formed the basis for future government policies and if the 1997 Constitution was amended to end communal voting.

The proposals of the military for inter-racial tolerance were contested by the GCC, the Methodist Church and a number of provincial councils, which established an anti-hegemonic movement against the military and its commander, Frank Bainimarama. Whilst the military counter-hegemony removed an indigenous nationalist government and the chiefs from political power, traditional ties and alliances continued to influence the indigenous grassroots against the military and the interim government. Members of the deposed government argued that the 2006 military takeover was a counter-coup by Indo-Fijian leaders, who were deposed in the 1987 and the 2000 coups. The nationalist argument, of Indo-Fijian involvement in the 2006 coup and attempts to de-reserve indigenous land, was aimed at re-inventing the colonial legacy of dividing Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians and reinstating inter-cultural and inter-ethnic struggles for political power.

CONCLUSION

In the introduction, I defined neo-Gramscian concepts such as hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony by using the existing works of a number of prominent neo-Gramscian scholars, including Randolph Prasad, Nicola Pratt and William Carroll and Bob Ratner. Hegemony was defined as dominant political and social forces, anti-hegemony as social and sub-cultural resistance movements and counter-hegemony as political challenges that eventually replaced the existing political order or offered a viable alternative backed by a coalition of societal forces. I noted that in the thesis political leadership and political hegemony were used synonymously. By utilising these definitions, I developed a neo-Gramscian model based on hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony for the study of Fiji's political history and argued on the centrality of the role of ethnicity and race in shaping Fiji history by outlining the contribution of Charles Mill on the subject in his work "The Racial Contract."

I further argued that this thesis provided a new theoretical paradigm and explained the neo-Gramscian model based on political hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony by using neo-Gramscian themes such as the role of colonial legacy, ethnicity and culture and military in hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony. Furthermore, I argued that a cyclical pattern existed in post-colonial Fiji (1970 and 2006) based on chiefly hegemony, factionalisation of the indigenous bloc, formation of inter-ethnic alliances and the assertion of indigenous coercive hegemony which had its origins in colonial

Fiji. I further argued that this pattern was broken in 2006 by the military counter-hegemony that overthrew the indigenous political bloc in a coup and implemented policies to de-ethnicise Fiji politics. However, indigenous groups, including the chiefs formed an anti-hegemonic movement and challenged the hegemony of the military.

As for my methodology, I outlined the critical theory framework, developed by Robert Cox using Gramscian analysis and contrasted his model with the analysis of state power (epistemological perspectivism) by Joseph Femia. I also noted the influence of historical sociology on my approach on Fiji's political history. Building on Cox's critical theory, epistemological perspectivism and historical sociology, I argued that this thesis would look at the neo-Gramscian scholars since the 1980s and their analysis of the role of class, ethnicity and culture in shaping political hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony in colonial and post-colonial societies with a focus on the political history of Fiji.

In Chapter 1, I outlined in detail Modernisation, Dependency, neo-Dependency, World System, Gramscian and neo-Gramscian theories and went on to establish my analytical framework, arguing that the neo-Gramscian theory allowed Fiji's political history to be re-cast within the integrative framework that addressed the role of culture and ethnicity in political hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony. By using Girling, Pratt and Oncu's analysis of Thailand, Egypt and Turkey, I developed three inter-related neo-Gramscian

themes for the case study of Fiji: the legacy of colonial culture; the role of ethnicity and culture in hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony; and the role of the military in hegemony and counter-hegemony. These themes complimented my neo-Gramscian model and provided a rich analytical framework.

In Chapter 2, I showed how various theories discussed in Chapter 1 were used by Fiji theorists. Of particular importance was the work of Revisionist scholars, I.C. Campbell, Robert Nicole and Winston Halapua who appreciated the role played by culture and ethnicity in shaping anti-colonial protest movements and in particular, the role of the military in post-colonial societies. I further highlighted that the neo-Gramscian model of hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony developed in this thesis and supported by the neo-Gramscian analytical themes provided a unique analytical framework which had not existed in the past. Moreover, I argued that the richness of the model and the themes allowed for the analysis of either historical or future events in Fiji and elsewhere in the Pacific.

The first two themes were introduced in Chapter 3 which focused on the colonial historic bloc and the colonial culture, which affirmed the cultural hegemony of the indigenous chiefs in relation to indigenous administration and land. However, the Hill Tribes of Fiji refused to accept the authority of the chiefs and the colonial government and as a result, the colonial bloc relied on the military to enforce its hegemony by force. As a result, the military throughout

the colonial period played a central role against indigenous sub-cultural movements, which were discussed in Chapter 4.

The cultural hegemony of the chiefs had its origin in pre-cession Fiji and in particular in the indigenous Kingdom of Bau. During cession, the social structure of Bau was seen by the colonial authorities as reflecting the traditions and customs of the whole of Fiji and as a result the Bauan social system became the neo-traditional orthodoxy. The cultural role of the chiefs was institutionalised with the establishment of the Great Council of Chiefs, which became the official authority on indigenous custom during colonial and post-colonial periods.

Despite the seemingly cordial relationship between the colonial authorities and the indigenous chiefs, Governors O' Brien and Jackson with the support of the European community in Fiji challenged the customary authority of the chiefs as well as the colonial protective policy towards indigenous Fijians. I argued that as a result of the actions of these reformist colonial Governors, there were divisions and conflicts within the colonial historic bloc. However, besides internal divisions and conflict, there were also external threats to the colonial historic bloc, mostly from indigenous sub-cultural anti-hegemonic movements, which were discussed in Chapter 4. These movements attacked the cultural hegemony of the chiefs and the political hegemony of the colonial administration but were unsuccessful in replacing the colonial political order.

In Chapter 5, I highlighted the role played by culture and ethnicity in shaping

rival political blocs. Governor Sir Arthur Gordon introduced a third ethnic element in the colony, following his decision to import Indian indentured labourers to work on European plantations. However, following the end of indenture in 1920, Indo-Fijian leaders demanded political equality, resulting in an inter-ethnic alliance between the indigenous Fijian chiefs and the Europeans after World War II. The indigenous Fijian chiefs transformed their cultural hegemony into political hegemony in the 1960s and established a cultural/ethnic bloc with the formation of the Alliance Party in preparation for independence.

In Chapter 6, I argued that after independence, Fiji went through a cyclical pattern (1970 and 2006) of chiefly hegemony, factionalisation of the indigenous bloc, inter-ethnic alliances and the assertion of indigenous coercive hegemony, which had its origins in colonial Fiji. By independence the chiefs of Fiji had established a chief-led historic bloc premised exclusively on the ideology of the paramountcy of indigenous political interests. However, as was the case with the colonial historic bloc, the chief-led historic bloc faced internal divisions from indigenous nationalists from 1975 and external challenges in the form of indigenous and Indo-Fijian inter-ethnic alliances, which led to the ouster of the chief-led historic bloc or counter-hegemony, following the April 1987 elections.

In Chapter 7, I introduced the theme of the role of military in hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony in interaction with colonial legacies and ethnic and cultural politics. In 1987, ethnic divisions or racial hierarchies were

exploited by the chiefs as the military re-asserted chiefly political hegemony by ousting a multi-ethnic government from power. Nevertheless, divisions and factions resurfaced in the post-1987 chief-led historic bloc as chiefs and indigenous groups contested for political power, forcing Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka to form an inter-ethnic alliance with the Indo-Fijian National Federation Party, resulting in the multiracial 1997 Constitution. Under the new constitution, divisions among indigenous Fijians intensified and a number of indigenous anti-hegemonic parties formed alliances with the Fiji Labour Party to win government after the 1999 election.

In Chapter 8, I outlined how the inter-ethnic alliance established prior to the 1999 election fell apart as indigenous nationalists once again invoked racial and cultural claims against Indo-Fijians, ending with the May 2000 coup. I detailed the events of 2000 which demonstrated the militarisation of indigenous divisions and the continuation of the colonial legacy of ethnic divisions. The coup leaders sought to oust President Ratu Mara for not agreeing with a nationalist petition to dismiss the Peoples' Coalition government, and exploited ethnic divisions to incapacitate the Indo-Fijian Prime Minister, Mahendra Chaudhry. The 2000 coup caused divisions among members of the Great Council of Chiefs as some influential chiefs supported the Speight coup. Besides divisions among members of the GCC, the military was also divided and in November 2000, there was a mutiny at the barracks as sympathisers of the 2000 coup attempted, without success, to assassinate the commander. Initially, the commander supported initiatives by the military-installed interim

government to appease indigenous nationalists. However, after the mutiny, the commander started to openly criticise indigenous nationalists who supported the coup. This was the beginning of the military anti-hegemony which transformed into counter-hegemony by 2006.

In Chapter 9, I argued that after the 2000 coup, the indigenous military became autonomous of the chiefs, culminating in the 5 December 2006 coup. The commander of the Fiji Military Forces, Frank Bainimarama, justified the military 2006 coup on grounds that the deposed Soqosoqo ni Duavata ni Lewenivanua government was corrupt, racist and introduced policies that would have led to lawlessness. The most salient feature of the coup was the attempt by the military regime to de-ethnicise Fiji's politics. Nevertheless, Bainimarama faced resistance from the GCC, the Methodist Church members of the deposed government and also from the South Pacific Forum and human rights organisations. Regional governments, including Australia and New Zealand, imposed selective sanctions and in October 2007 regional governments gained a commitment from the commander that Fiji would hold elections in 2009. Despite agreeing to a timeframe for a return to an elected government, the army commander insisted on removing communal voting from the multiracial 1997 Constitution and making inter-ethnic cooperation a pre-condition for all future governments of Fiji.

Overall, the thesis showed that during the colonial period, the political hegemony of the colonial administration and the social hegemony of the

indigenous chiefs were sustained by a colonial historic-bloc, established by the Deed of Cession. This bloc consisted of the chiefs, colonial administration and Europeans. Despite the semblance of stability, there were divisions and factions within the respective blocs, in particular challenges to the colonial hegemony from indigenous sub-cultural and Indo-Fijian anti-hegemonic movements. However, these anti-hegemonic movements failed to form a counter-hegemonic force because of ethnic divisions.

With the introduction of Indian indentured labourers, a three-way ethnic power struggle ensued, resulting in the formation of an alliance between indigenous chiefs and Europeans against Indo-Fijians. By the 1960s, indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians had formed rival political blocs and the chief-led Alliance Party established political hegemony by reinforcing ethnic hierarchies.

After independence the political hegemony of chiefs was compromised by the factionalisation of the indigenous bloc (1975-1987) and was challenged by an inter-ethnic alliance (1987), which resulted in coercive indigenous assertion in the form of military intervention (1987 coups), which restored chiefly hegemony. The cycle of chiefly hegemony, indigenous factionalisation, inter-ethnic alliances and coercive assertions continued up until December 2006 when the commander of the Fiji Military Forces ousted the indigenous chiefs from power and implemented policies to de-ethnicise Fiji politics. However, the chiefs and indigenous landowners formed an anti-hegemonic movement and challenged the hegemony of the military, thereby highlighting the possibility of the

continuation of the cycle of hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony, characterised as a long process of de-colonisation.

The colonial bloc in Fiji was based on ethnic and cultural divisions and the reliance on the military force. As Fiji moved towards independence, ethnic divisions were reinforced and as a result, political parties emerged along ethnic lines. After independence, Fiji went through a period of de-colonisation characterised by two cycles of chiefly hegemony, indigenous factionalisation, inter-ethnic alliance and coercive indigenous assertion. However, this cycle was broken in 2006, following the ouster of the indigenous bloc by the Fiji military, which restructured colonial institutions such as the Great Council of Chiefs. Nevertheless, the indigenous bloc deposed in the coup re-grouped, raising the possibility of re-instating the political hegemony of the chiefs, thus continuing the cycle of hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony.

By using neo-Gramscian model of hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony, I developed three inter-related neo-Gramscian themes on the legacy of colonial culture, ethno-cultural divisions and the changing role of the military in political hegemony, anti-hegemony and counter-hegemony.

By applying these themes to the study of Fijian colonial and post-colonial political history, I have constructed a dynamic model, which highlighted the cycles of de-colonisation and the significance of political hegemony in colonial and post-colonial contexts. The model developed in this thesis has a projective

element and can be used to analyse future political events in Fiji, including the roles of ethnicity and culture in colonial and post-colonial hegemonies in the South Pacific region.

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