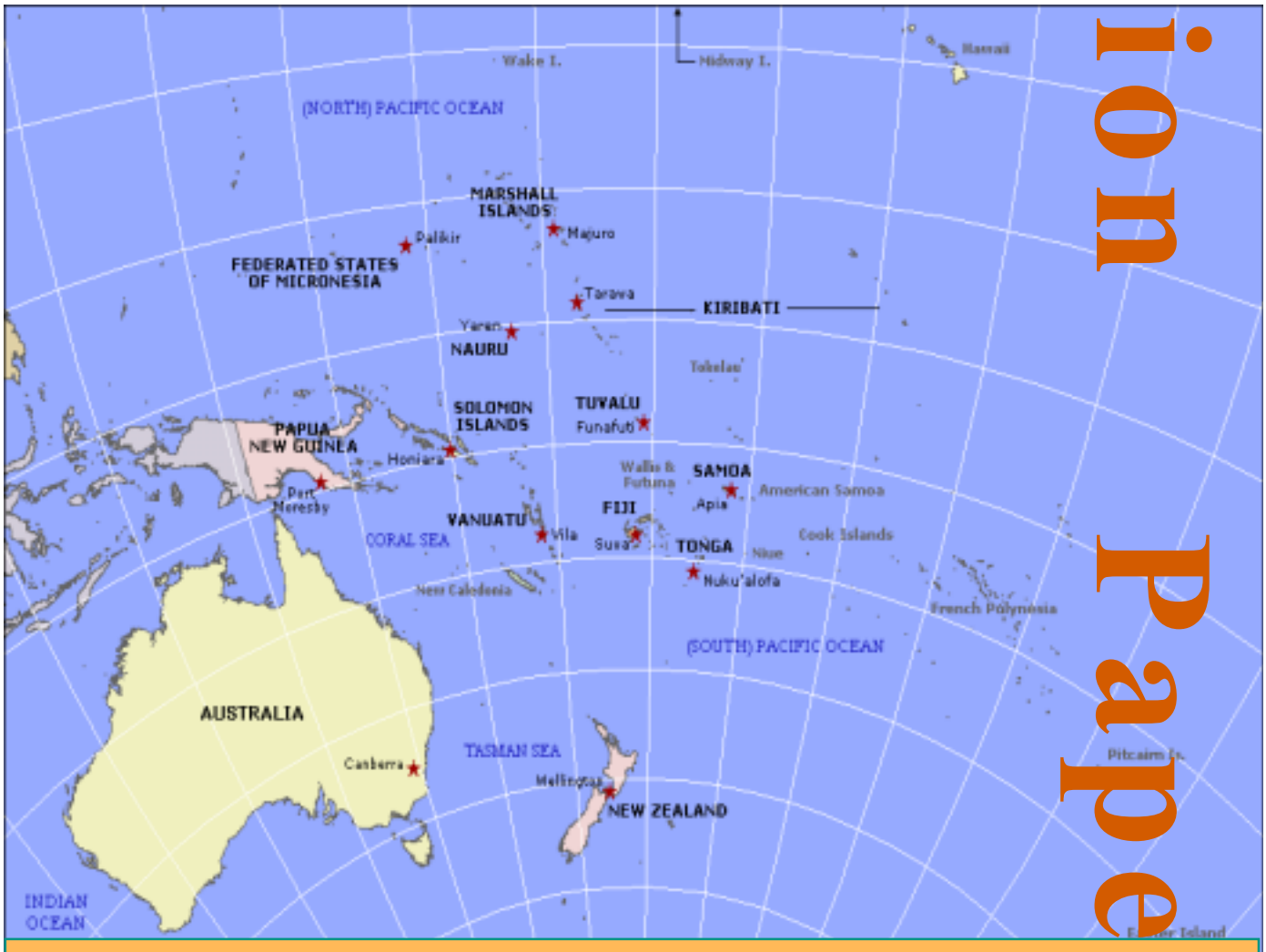
Discussion Paper

THE ROAD TO SOVEREIGNTY IN THE PACIFIC:

A Framework for Pacific Island Development Policy

Holiday Powell



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Abstract

The following paper examines the nature of Pacific Island democracies, and proposes a framework for developing more viable state infrastructures. The recent prevalence of corrupt and anarchic behaviour in some states is analysed as having been caused by socio-political and socio-economic instability. To understand why development policy should be reconsidered in the Pacific Islands, two questions are asked: What are the effects of political instability and economic dependency in the South Pacific on regional security? How can the islands' internal challenges be dealt with to prevent further state collapse and the possibility of providing a haven for terrorist organisation in the South Pacific? The paper argues that the islands' current political and economic instability present a significant security dilemma, and that swift regional and international measures must be taken to prevent further crises. The theoretical nature of democratisation and development policy is explored using various analyses in Jeff Haynes' *Towards Sustainable Democracy in the Third World*. Characteristics of the islands' deficient political process underscore the importance of adopting new policy in the South Pacific.

About the Author

Holiday Powell is Public Interest Law Scholar at the Loyola School of Law in Los Angeles, California. She graduated with honors from the University of California, Los Angeles with a degree in Political Science, International Relations and Spanish. Previous academic work at the University of Granada in Granada, Spain and policy work at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, DC tailored her interest in international law and developmental policy. When she graduated from UCLA in June 2002, she wanted to gain a better understanding of South Pacific culture and politics before returning to graduate school. Consequently, she obtained a work visa through the BUNAC word abroad programme and acquired positions at the School of Political Science and as an intern at the Centre for Strategic Studies: New Zealand, at Victoria University of Wellington

Comment from the Executive Director, CSS:NZ

In February 2003, Holiday Powell presented herself at the Centre for Strategic Studies: New Zealand asking if she could be taken on as an intern for a few months. Her enterprise and initiative is rewarded by the publication of this Discussion Paper. Her views are refreshingly frank and reflect a perspective that emerges from candid analysis. The Discussion Paper is offered to scholars, officials and politicians as another contribution to the ongoing debate about New Zealand's relations with the people of Oceania and indeed the wider and critical development of our common security in the future.

Peter Cozens,
Executive Director
Centre for Strategic Studies: New Zealand

Introduction

Policy with regard to the Pacific Islands has always been rather precarious. The imperialistic giants of the 19th century and earlier, namely Britain, France and Spain, colonized the region in a mad rush to extend their influence to what seemed at the time as the "outer fringes" of the world. As their empires collapsed so too did their relations with the Pacific Islands. Although American trading entrepreneurs were in the region prior to the twentieth century, state-sponsored diplomatic policy was not enacted until the United States occupied the islands during the Second World War. The military build-up rendered Guam, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Marianas as lasting US military outposts. After the war New Zealand and Australia assumed a new, more active role in the Pacific as a result of two coinciding policy moves: a combination of financial and political pressures forced the British to ditch their regional control, which thereby allowed New Zealand and Australia to capitalize on increasing domestic pressures to engage in international affairs. For their own financial gain, Japan also began to interact with island business and political leaders.

While the United States and the Asia-Pacific countries wanted to benefit from diplomatic relationships with the islands, they were not inclined to participate in island development. A decolonization process took place in the 1960s and 1970s to relieve these nations of their bureaucratic responsibilities, and to give the Pacific Islands political and economic sovereignty. Inept guidance, policies and leadership unfortunately left many of the islands without the proper tools or motivation to build viable and independent states. Many islands are to this day politically dilapidated as a result. The ramifications, though felt mostly by island inhabitants, are relevant to their geographic neighbours and past colonists. Terrorist and criminal networks have extended their influence and activity to the Pacific Islands. The proximity of the islands to Indonesia, where terrorism has occurred at alarming rates raises additional security issues. Due to their recent political and economic upheavals, many Pacific Islands are presently unstable, and are thus susceptible to terrorist activity. The questions I pose are: What are the effects of political instability and economic dependence in the South Pacific on regional security? How can the islands' internal challenges be dealt with to prevent further state collapse and terrorist organisation in the South Pacific?

The Hypothesis

I intend to prove that political instability and economic volatility in the island states present a significant regional security dilemma. Since their independence in the 1960s and 1970s the islands have been introduced to transnational corporatism, multilateralism and international deregulation; all which have caused a breakdown of distinct national societies, cultures and state boundaries and created political disenfranchisement. Because of their size many islands have depended on aid from neighbouring countries, including Japan, New Zealand, and Australia. Since the 1990s however, these metropolitan nations have attempted to pull out of the islands, primarily due to their own faltering economies and have, as a result, exacerbated economic volatility in the island states.

These internal stresses are routinely manipulated by terrorist networks and consequently require immediate intervention. In a discussion of *al-Qa'ida's* operations in Kenya, senior correspondent of the BBC, Jane Corbin stated that "it was another failing state, another suitable location in which to base a terror network; the government was corrupt and crony-ridden, the population poor and law enforcement weak" (Sinclair, 2003, p. 4). The islands' vulnerability caused by the close proximity to terrorist networks in Indonesia is exacerbated by their own corruption, poverty, and civil unrest. Intervention to improve economic and political stability and efficient law enforcement will help to prevent terrorist organisation in the islands and further reiterating the importance of regional partnerships in building viable post-colonial states in the South Pacific.

The Methodological Approach

My research proceeds along three lines. The first is through a literature review of texts that explain the economic and political developments of the Pacific Islands since their independence. The primary source for this background is *The Tides of History: The Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century*, which is edited by K.R. Howe, Robert Kiste, and Brij Lal. In its review of twentieth century

history, the book chronicles the evolving political, social, and economic experience in the islands that coincided with colonization and subsequent independence. Divided into three parts, the book covers the periods of colonization, decolonization, and post colonization, focusing ultimately on the challenges that the Pacific Islands face in their role as a partner in the Pacific Rim. I have also relied on literature about Asia-Pacific security, which explains the theoretical and historical nature of Asia-Pacific relationships in formulating regional security. These texts include *Negotiating the Pacific Century* by Bell, McDonald, and Tidell and *Asia-Pacific Security* by Gary Kintworth, which both discuss the emergence of a "new" Asian dynamic in the post-Cold War period and its implications for regional security. Other sources are *A Pacific Peace: Issues and Responses* edited by Mohamed Jawhar Hassan and *The Making of a Security Community in the Asia-Pacific* by Bunn Nagara and K.S. Balakrishnan that detail both the internal and regional challenges of South-East Asian states. The listed texts comment on the development of South-East Asia and the South Pacific Islands within the past twenty years. In particular, this overview introduces the reader to the nature of regional security issues and highlights their complexities.

Current articles on the political and economic developments in Tonga, Fiji, Solomon Islands, and other regional hot spots have been useful as well. *The Dominion Post*, *Herald Tribune*, *The New Zealand Herald*, and other regional press discuss the legal and political debates that are current in the islands. These sources illustrate the vulnerability of the Pacific Islands to terrorist organisation by citing the activity that has already occurred in the area and outlining potential spots for further engagement. Once I discuss the potential security threat in the Pacific I turn my focus to hone in on regional solutions. Government reports from both New Zealand and Australia, combined with papers from local nongovernmental organisations give insight to the major players involved in the debate for intervention. They also present the politics and the challenges of committing financial resources and personnel to the area.

My attendance at regional conferences during early 2003 is the third method that I use to conduct the research. Speaking directly to the politicians and experts in the field promotes a better understanding of the cultural and historical climate in the post-colonized Pacific and thereby more efficiently exposes the real issues associated with intervening in the islands' politics and economics. The New Zealand Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) hosted two gatherings in early 2003. CSCAP representatives from various Asia-Pacific nations were there to discuss the issue of terrorism, transnational crime, and conflict resolution. I therefore acquired a more comprehensive understanding of the history and present situation of terrorist organisation in Southeast Asia. Paul Sinclair of the International Defence Relations Branch of the New Zealand Ministry of Defence was able to share potential policy solutions to the present internal as well as regional security threats with regards to Malaita, Vanuatu, and other specific island states. Peter Coutts was able to provide information about the long-term strategies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade as well as the Pacific Islands Forum and its Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER), to foster economic stability in the region. The representatives at the conference were able to convey local reactions to a potential security dilemma and were consequently able to help advance a serious debate on the prescriptive measures that ought now be enacted.

The Present Situation

The proximity of the Pacific Islands to Southeast Asia has recently presented a perplexing security threat to both the region and international community. Although the small nation states have little to offer *al-Qa'ida* and *Jemaah Islamiyah* (JI) networks in the way of Islamic fundamentalism, weaponry, and financial resources, they do nonetheless offer havens for illegal activity that can ultimately be used to aid terrorist groups. Several Pacific Islands are 'failing' states; their economies are paralysed and civil society is stressed due to organised crime and violence. Since their decolonization, many in the region have been prone to ethnic and communal conflict as well as political insurgency and have thus become susceptible to political violence and terrorist organisation. Poor governance has created a vacuum that supports the illegal practices of terrorist and criminal organisations.

Links established between a*l-Qa'ida* and *Abu Sayyaf* in The Philippines following the September 11, 2001 attacks, and threats made by *Jemaah Islamiyah* in Singapore in December 2001 highlighted the Asia-Pacific region as a setting for terrorist activity. The large number of political parties and Muslim activist groups in Indonesia are an outgrowth of that nation's repressive history of colonial rule and subsequent policies under Soeharto. Assertive Muslim groups seek to 'Islamise' Indonesia in a manner that was denied by Soeharto's repressive regime (Veitch, 2003, p.6); ethnic violence and Muslim-Christian relations have been the result. Islamic fervour was highlighted in February 2003 by the bombing of an Indonesian police force building in Jakarta. The attack was a reaction to the detention of *Jemaah Islamiyah's* spiritual leader, Abu Bakar Bashir, in a building located across the street. Leaders connected with JI have been found throughout Southeast Asia and many remain at large.[1]

Recent evidence has uncovered incidences of terrorist and criminal activity in the Pacific Islands as well. In February 2003 officials took a Muslim cleric named Abdul Majid into custody, over suspicions related to US$30,000 cash they found at his residence. He told sources that the money came from King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia, who hoped it would be used to aid poor Muslims during Ramadan. Though he claimed he headed the Islamic Institute of the South Pacific and had resided in Suva for eighteen years, the Fiji Muslim League, the main body representing the nation's 60,000 Muslims knew little about Majid or his financial situation. His illusive financial standing was compounded by his educational background and recent visits in Southeast Asia. He told people that he had studied with Osama bin Laden at a university in Saudi Arabia. More perplexing was his presence with a man said to be an official of Saudi Arabia's Department of Tourism and Culture in Samoa, where there are few Muslims and no mosque. While the two men were there the United States Embassy closed as a result of a security alert. The Chargé d'Affaires, Frankie Reed, told Apia media that the scare was caused by "two suspicious-looking characters surveying the embassy" (Field, 2003, A1). Majid's connection to *al-Qa'ida* networks is dubious and yet his peculiar activity underscores recent security concerns.

Due to its relatively small following in the Pacific Island states, Islamic fundamentalism is unlikely to inspire any significant terrorist organisation in the region. There are however, many criminal activities (some which are governmentally sponsored) that potentially support terrorist organisation in both Southeast Asia and the Middle East. The economies of several states have stagnated and crime has risen due to ineffective law enforcement. As a result, drug trafficking, human smuggling and money laundering have become prevalent criminal activities in the region.

Money laundering through a system of offshore banks has been active in the Pacific for some time but has only recently, in the wake of the war on terrorism, really come under the international limelight. Just weeks after the September 11, 2001 attacks, the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OCED) scrutinized Nauru for its offshore tax haven. Its 400 offshore banks were all registered to one governmental mailbox, and were notorious for being an outpost for money laundering by Russian criminal groups. At a meeting in October 2002 the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) named eleven countries as being critically deficient in both their commitment to and enforcement of anti-money laundering initiatives. Of those eleven nations, the Pacific region included five: The Philippines, Nauru, Cook Islands, Indonesia and Burma (Richardson, 2002). According to the Agence France Presse news agency, half of the banks registered in Nauru are subsidiaries of American banks and a third being of Middle Eastern origin (BBC News, 2001). Since the Bali bombing the United States has coerced the Government of Nauru to outlaw offshore banks. While Nauruan officials have complained that their sovereignty has been compromised by US policy, Colin Powell argues that "Nauru's offshore sector consisting exclusively of shell banks, poses an unacceptable money-laundering risk" (Chulov, 2003, p.11). The rigid demands made by the United States and the FATF are a reflection of the US$70 billion in Russian Criminal money that has already been laundered through Nauru's offshore banks (Field, 2001).

Money laundering is only one of many problems in Nauru. The country has already held two general elections, elected three presidents, and experienced an economic collapse this past year. Within

the past two years the nation has fallen from being one of the world's wealthiest per capita nations to one of the region's first 'failed' states. A representative from the Asian Development Bank has commented that Nauru's economic decline was the result of "prolonged economic and financial mismanagement and the progressive exhaustion of phosphate resources" (Field, 2003, p.B2). Today Nauru is home to some 10,000 indigenous people and hundreds of Middle Eastern asylum seekers previously en route to Australia, 450 who remain in a detention camp (ibid.). In addition to being reprimanded for its tolerance of money laundering, the Nauruan Government has also been criticized for its controversial passport trade. The international community and US in particular, have feared that passports have been used by *al-Qa'ida* operatives and have thus pressured it to end the sale. Chinese drug dealers and people-smugglers were the primary participants in the scheme, otherwise known as the Citizenship Investment Program (Chulov, 2003, p.8). Money laundering and passport schemes have generated substantial government income, and yet, have compromised island relations with expatriate government officials and business partners.

The Solomon Islands is another trouble spot in the Pacific. In 1998 the Guadalcanal Liberation Front (GLF) initiated a civil war under the leadership of ex-Special Constable Harold Keke. In reaction to their rebellion and assault on the citizens of Guadalcanal, the Special Constables (SC) police force and a group of armed civilians have since joined regular police officers in operations against the GLF. Since September 2002, SCs and civilian volunteers have tortured and killed suspected GLF supporters and their families. The numerous human rights violations have sparked international concern and have thus led to the appointment of British official Bill Morrell to the post of Police Commissioner (The Economist, 2003 p.29). Economic inequality has ignited ethnic conflict and a subsequent civil war, which has displaced 30,000 people from their homes, paralysed the police force and hurt the economy. Following an amnesty in 2000, the government enlisted 2,000 militants as SCs and permitted them to keep their arms. While some helped to restore order in parts of the islands, others have abused their power and committed human rights violations. Former Police Commissioner Frederick Soaki was assassinated in February 2003 for trying to demobilize the SCs. Recent attempts were made to disarm the SCs but were thwarted by their extortion of government funds. The country is, as a result, on the verge of bankruptcy. In March 2003, the Technical Mission of Taiwan celebrated its twentieth anniversary in the Solomon Islands and proposed giving further technical advice and training to local farmers. Their mission, though credible, may not be enough to reverse the economic decline and resource stagnation of the state.

Tonga and Papua New Guinea also figure in regional security scepticism. In March of 2003 Solomon Island Ministers were prepared to accept a fraudulent offer of US$350 million on promise of a government down payment of US$10 million. A PNG businessman, who was convicted of fraudulent activity in his country, was revealed as being the mastermind of the scam. Meanwhile, the US has criticized the Tongan government for having overlooked the shipment of suspect cargoes on Tongan registered boats to *al-Qa'ida* operatives in the Middle East (Keith-Reid, 2002).

The standard Western model of a state is a discrete, territorially bounded, and politically sovereign unit; one with a legal monopoly over force and violence, responsibility for law and order, and focus on national solidarity, culture and identity. The Pacific Islands have arguably lacked legitimate governance since their colonization and since their decolonization, been directed by an inadequate notion of state building. Consequently, many have failed to construct viable states. Institutional corruption has compromised the civil liberties of the citizenry. Poor law enforcement has allowed crime to grow at alarming rates. The mismanagement of government funds and natural resources has paralysed economies, and further eroded any semblance of civil society. Coupled with ethnic conflict in various island states, these conditions have led to deleterious consequences, as demonstrated by recent events.

The Notion of 'Democracy' in the Pacific

In order to establish more orderly and secure Pacific Island societies, modes for democratisation must be considered. The frameworks that governments have adopted since decolonization are fraught with corruption, mismanagement and archaic ideology. Their inefficiency has inspired the breakdown of island civil societies and financial institutions, and in their most extreme cases, has produced 'failed' states. Scholars, politicians

and local activists have consequently stressed the importance of rebuilding many of these states by means of redefining the notion of democracy as it pertains to the Pacific Islands. Much of the literature on democratisation has overlooked the Pacific Islands and instead focused on Africa, Asia, South America and Eastern Europe. Consequently, normative prescriptions have been imposed on the islands (both during their decolonization and in subsequent years) without much understanding of local culture and tradition.

To proceed further, two explanations are necessary: what comprises a democracy and how the notions of democracy and tradition interact with each other in the South Pacific. In defining 'democracy', I refer to a representative democracy; one that is devoted to protecting the individual rights and freedoms of the citizenry. Elected assemblies govern and direct the activities of the state. They often times compliment an elected president, who exercises power which is accountable to and garnered by federal checks. These democratic norms do not exist in many of the islands. A few of the islands have what Haynes refers to as 'façade' or quasi-democracies. They are characterised by rulers that have no real commitment to upholding the practices of democracy but do allow very tightly controlled elections. The government and military work together under such systems to prohibit more socially progressive and reformist movements from occurring. Most of the Pacific Islands enjoy greater civil liberties and political participation than garnered by quasi-democracies. Many fit into what Haynes calls 'electoral' democracies. While they constitutionally appear to fulfil the procedural criteria, they have inadequate civil liberties and insufficient societal toleration and political participation (Haynes, 2001, 14). In an electoral democracy there are rules that determine the conduct of elections and they most often times result in governments that exercise some concern for the processes of law. However, there is no certainty that the civil liberties of the citizenry, inherent of a 'liberal' democracy, will be protected. Political stability is a by-product of the leadership rather than democratic ideals in such a system.

At the other end of the continuum is what Haynes calls a 'full' democracy. In this case the notion of democracy extends beyond the structural requirements of electoral democracy, "to include real and sustained, as opposed to rhetorical and intermittent, stress on individual freedoms" and participatory representation (ibid., 17). Inherent of 'full' democracies is a commitment to human rights, individual freedoms and civil liberties, and an understanding that the military is subservient to civilian rule. There is a political participation and accountability shared by political elites and common citizens. Because many of the Pacific Island states do not follow the frameworks inherent of a 'full' democracy, modes for change must be adopted. Influenced by their discipline, economists, politicians and humanitarians have produced multiple prescriptions for democratising states. When synthesized, their ideas create three general approaches to discuss the issue of democratisation.

Structural analysis is one approach, which focuses on identifying the "particular [governmental or societal] constraints operating at any moment in time, and the particular political processes which they favour or hinder" (Cammack, 1997, 173). Structural constraints are argued to decisively influence the stability of democracies, prospects for political change, and foundations for social systems. Changing class, state and transnational structures direct a country towards or away from democratisation. Democracy can only be established when the state acts as an independently elected (and accountable) institution. There should be equilibrium of power between state governance and organized social interests. Democracies can be strengthened when social and economic structures remain productive and efficient (Haynes, 19). Institutional legacies and progressive international climates are other important factors for democratisation. While the structural approach lends itself to empirical analysis, it does have various flaws. It often confuses the influence of various class structures and political processes on political change. Political parties are for example, more likely in the short term "to have a more direct impact upon political outcomes than deep structures have" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997, 22). The approach is also unable to sufficiently explain the divergent political paths of countries with similar socio-economic structures during times of political change (Haynes, 21).

Modernisation was a widely adopted approach to democratising states in the twentieth century. It rests on the notion that economic development is the primary condition for democratisation. Western

capitalist societies have naively perceived democratisation "as an outcome of socio-economic development, not a condition of it" (Leftwich, 1993, 612). Moderate inflation, declining socio-economic inequality, favourable international climates, strong parliamentary institutions, literacy, advanced education and a strong middle class are all elements that favour democratic process (Haynes, 23). The major shortcoming of the modernisation approach is the fact that levels of economic development are not directly associated with democratic practices. Some of the world's poorest nations are democratic states[2] while some of the most authoritarian regimes, particularly in the Middle East, are economically developed. It can be argued that democracy is at times 'facilitated', if not directly triggered, by economic development but in order to understand why nations choose divergent paths, policy-makers must consider a more comprehensive explanation.

The transition approach provides yet another explanation for the development of democratic processes. It examines the decisions and actions of political agents, their interactions with each other, and their influences at moments of political change; "the motivations, preferences, and calculations of self-interested actors … One agent's initiative prompts another actor's response and … political events cascade iteratively from one to another" (Bratton et al., 24). Political outcomes are viewed as being a product of action and bargaining rather than delineated principle, and are thus a 'second-best compromise' (Haynes, 26). A major problem with the transition approach is its oversimplification of actors' abilities to influence change. Certain past political constraints can make political change either very difficult or impossible, regardless of the individual's skills to endorse and bargain change. The approach also overlooks the importance of 'informal rules' garnered by the citizenry, which often counter the self-interested propaganda of political elites. The inattention to long-term shifts is a product of the approach's belief that processes are random. While transitions are at times uncertain, there are usually similar sequences of social and political reactions based on some kind of 'structural scaffolding'.

I would argue that while no one approach effectively outlines a model for democratisation, they as a composite, underscore the complexity of political change. Haynes argues that the three approaches commonly stress the importance of historical uniqueness, unplanned events, and international developments to stimulate change (ibid., 29). Since there does not exist a single precondition of democracy, identifying a single cause rooted in economic, social, cultural, or international terms will not suffice in yielding a viable prescription for re-democratising the Pacific Island states. I have instead identified six key variables that affect the democratic process in the South Pacific Islands: the role of tradition in governance, government elitism and leadership, political institutions, economic prosperity, civil discontent, and regional organisation. These six characteristics of the islands' political processes underscore the applicability of Haynes' three approaches to the discussion of democratisation in the Pacific Islands.

'Tradition' in Island Culture & Politics

Tradition permeates all facets of social intercourse in the islands. Extending from family organisation to chiefly rule, tradition is the cornerstone of political institutions in many of the islands – influencing processes such as constitutional development, legal implementation and electoral politics. Inherent in island beliefs is the commitment to the transmission of tradition from past generations to the present generation. Coupled with this commitment is the understanding that tradition is to be respected and observed with concerted vigilance (Lawson, 1996, 10). There is an expectation that all which is derived from the past is to be valued in the present and carried on through the future. As a source of political authority and legitimacy, tradition has been able to ignite post-colonial liberation movements and conversely, subordinate the interests of the citizenry by reinforcing corrupt and elitist governments. Many political elites have manipulated traditional beliefs and customs to benefit their own financial and political interests.

Stemming from Weber's post-Enlightenment belief that 'tradition' related to the 'irrational', other theorists subsequently came to associate 'tradition' with antiquated political orders that were hierarchical, organic and unchanging (ibid., 13). Inherent in this order was "an emphasis on personal and particularistic relations which undermined any sort of 'independent political aspiration or initiative' … ideas about equality and legal rights were entirely absent and … embodied instead strictly personal and hierarchical notions of loyalty and duty" (ibid.). Although Weber's notion of tradition as the 'irrational' is now widely

debated, his argument that 'tradition' directly opposes modernisation has been illustrated by many developing nations. It has, in many of the islands, prevented political liberalisation and financial development. Only when chiefly and state leaders, and island political culture in general, recognises it as a political 'legitimator' may traditional values be reconciled to accommodate critical initiatives of political change.

Governmental Leadership

Poor leadership in Pacific Island governments plagues democratic process in the region in two key ways. In many cases, island leaders, regardless of their executive stature, disregard democratic principles delineated in their national constitutions. They instead rule to benefit the political and financial interests of their political party, chiefly family, or personal accord. Having held the position of Fijian chief minister during colonial rule, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara proceeded to govern Fiji as Prime Minister once independence was granted. When his party lost re-election in 1987 by a predominately Fijian-Indian led opposition, he sponsored an overthrow of the new government by a military coup. Mara resumed his post in the illegitimate interim regime and stepped down only once the post-coup elections of 1992 took place. (He then became the deputy head of state.) Rather than using his leadership to support democratic principles within the constitution, Mara exploited his chiefly status to head an illegitimate regime. A similar disregard for democratic process is currently being illustrated in Tonga. King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV's parliament has announced plans to alter the constitution to safeguard royal decisions from judicial review. He has also attempted to curb freedom of press there, and tried to ban the *Taimi O Tonga* newspaper for three months over its allegedly seditious content (Tunnah, 2003). Circulation of the paper resumed only after the government was faced with a court injunction and substantial international pressure. There are however, no plans to override Tupou's intended constitutional amendments.

The second problem exists where leaders are willing to rule democratically but do not have the expertise or commitment to enforce a separation of governmental institutions. In this case, the executive, legislative and judicial branches have little autonomy. Police commissions for example, tread a fine line of authority and in some cases, assume a state-sponsored militant role. Militaries are often overly involved in geopolitics, often support authoritarian regimes and abuse citizens' human rights. Two committees run Guam's legal system. The Judicial Council consists of members from the legislature, judiciary, and executive branches, and oversees all justice cases, ranging from police matters to appellate court rulings. The Civil Service Commission is responsible for all personnel work related to 'justice work'. The political influence "is immediate, constant, and chronic in the organisation as well as the behaviour of the police, leading to repeated serious charges of police corruption (Lennon, 2001, 73). The attorney general is subject to similar political interference. Since 1981 the office has hired some seventy-five attorneys; the shortest stay being six hours and longest estimating twenty-three months (ibid.). The Police Department and Attorney General's Office and territorial courts exercise justice in a way that mirrors their character. The character of the governor changes the character of the justice administered. This poor separation of governmental institutional authority is prevalent in many of the islands. Efficient governance is a rarity in the islands because leaders use tradition to sanctify their dominance and exclude others from sharing political power.

Role of Political Institutions

Democracy as a form of government is difficult to achieve and implement in the islands because it reflects Western conceptions of governance and modernisation. These notions clash with island history and custom, and as discussed, commitments to 'tradition'. Traditional values have routinely led to authoritarian rule as well as interdependent and fused governmental organisation. Poor leadership is in this respect, coupled with the absence of stable underpinnings for democratic political institutions.

Though many islands profess their commitment to democratic principles, they do so with a constitution that is inherently undemocratic. Political leaders continually alter democratic provisions within their national constitutions to reinforce their personal political agendas. Fiji best illustrates this problem. Democratic norms associated with the doctrine of constitutionalism were never implemented in post-colonial Fiji. The 1970 constitution of independent Fiji secured the rights and interests of indigenous Fijians and also implemented a system of representation that would favour the (Fijian) Alliance Party.

Communal representation called for an equal number of Fijian and Indian Fijian members in the House of Representatives. However, eight 'general' members from 'other races' were also added; these tended to be Europeans that aligned themselves with Alliance. Thus despite the formal parity, a racial advantage was given to the Fijians from the outset, both to secure representative advantage and indefinite rule. As Stephanie Lawson argues, "the 1970 constitution cannot be seen as an instrument for securing the practice of democratic politics beyond the formal superficialities of parliamentary government. More specifically, the principle of alternation in government, which is an essential hallmark of modern representative democracy, was undermined to the extent that the legitimacy of the opposition party as a potential or actual government was not recognized by the Alliance leadership" (ibid. 8). The 1970 Fijian constitution undoubtedly supported a dominant one-party government, but it also enunciated support for multi-party governance and access to the state apparatus. Unfortunately neither Alliance nor the military, which was headed by chiefly elites, would accept the legitimacy of a regime that permitted a transfer of power. Since it first compromised its constitutional integrity after the 1987 military coup, the Fijian government has revised its constitution to essentially institutionalise "its own version of political apartheid in the name of 'indigenous rights'" (Lawson, 1992, 1). Their intolerance of and disregard for such constitutionally democratic processes illustrated that the constitution, when challenged, lacked universal acceptance.

Fiji is only one of multiple nations that lack a democratically drafted and enforced constitution. Tonga's constitutional acquiescence to the Royal family has been the biggest impediment to democratisation of the state. It adopted a constitution in 1875 that reflected several established edicts. The Vava'u Code of 1838 established a formal rule of law. Though it limited the power of local chiefdom, it sought to reaffirm the supremacy of the royal family. The Second Vava'u Code of 1850 placed further limitations on local chiefly authority, mentioned property rights, and defined the positions of judges. The next progressive move was the Emancipation Edict of 1862, which freed commoners of their serfdom status. While the constitution limited the power of local chiefs, it nonetheless reaffirmed the prevalence of a landed aristocracy. The king appointed chiefs to positions as nobles with specials rights and privileges. The present constitution has three parts. The first, titled the Declaration of Rights, defines the liberties of the citizenry. The Form of Government defines the Privy Council, an executive branch headed by the monarchy, the cabinet, consisting of ministers, governors, and headed by the Prime Minister, and the Legislative Assembly, comprised of ministers, noble representatives and 'commoner' representatives. It also establishes the structure and role of the judiciary. The third part, called The Land, delineates all policy having to do with land tenure. The constitution ultimately vests all power in the monarchy. The monarch, when appointing the Prime Minister and other ministers, is not meant to consult with anyone. The ministers are therefore not held accountable to the Assembly (nor the citizenry) but instead to the monarchy (Lawson, 1996, 93). Governmental practice is as a result, contrary to principles of democratic governance.

A scarce reverence for constitutionalism has led to a breakdown of law enforcement. By its nature, "a constitution, being the first guiding and organizing principle of a state, is thus both a cause as well as a product of the legal behaviour found in that state" (Lennon, 2001, 54). A constitution exists to give guidance by precedent. Legal interpretation and enforcement is problematic in many of the government institutions because leaders do not follow established precedence within the constitution. As demonstrated by the mentioned Fijian and Tongan political leaders, officials instead interpret and enforce laws in a fashion that suits their interests. Liberal interpretations of state constitutions have in many cases, thwarted the checks and balances of efficient governance. A poor separation of political institutions is characterized by legislative branches that have become puppets of executive offices, by high court decisions that have been overruled by political elites, and by police departments that have become overly involved in politics. The Guam Police Department for example, has no separate code of ethics, training outside of the department, or mandated isolation from political leaders. The Attorney General's Office and the Superior Court of Guam operate under the same parameters (ibid., 70). The result of nonexistent institutional checks and balances has been corruption at all levels of government in the island states. Legal finality embedded within the nations' constitutional precedents must be stressed. Political institutions will only

become more democratic once there exists judicial legitimacy and institutional oversight.

The Unravelling of Economic Development

Since Islanders immersed themselves in the international marketplace, they have changed in two distinct ways; to begin, they have noticed the higher standards of living in other areas of the world, and secondly, they have come to realize that the provision of public health services has reduced death rates in the islands. Islanders now strive for higher standards of living (that match those of Australia and New Zealand), but their current levels of production cannot sustain the demands of their growing populations. If production levels do not increase to support rising consumer capacities, one of two consequences will occur; either income transfers in the form of aid flows will be needed to ease budget constraints or consumption per head will need to decrease (Knapman, 1994, p.326). Either way, social frustration and economic instability will escalate in the region.

Per capita income in the South Pacific has grown by less than one percent in the past thirty years. In some islands it has actually declined. The population is meanwhile growing more than three percent every year (Hughes, 2003, 1). Economic decline has led to crime and violence in the islands and in extreme cases, has threatened state livelihood. As has been mentioned, there is a continual debate over the relative importance of economic prosperity and state democratisation. While economic prosperity cannot alone guarantee democratic process in the Pacific Islands, it can nonetheless, foster an environment that is much more tolerant to institutional and societal change.

Mismanagement and misappropriation of aid by recipient governments occurs regularly in a variety of ways. Since 1970 the Pacific Islands have received approximately US$50 billion in aid to use for programmes and initiatives of their discretion. Rather than invest the money for work and community development projects, recipient governments have used the aid to finance growing government bureaucracies. In some cases, elites "collect the 'rents' from generous 'aid packages'" and implement programs that reflect the interests of other political elites (Moore, 2003, B5). Dumping aid on short-term projects and government payrolls is particularly problematic when aid flows from Australia, New Zealand and the United States are counted as government income. Since government revenues appear to be stronger, local governments can disregard the reality of their failing financial situations.[3]

Income from the exploitation of natural resources has also been grossly mismanaged. Thirty years ago Fiji, PNG and Nauru could boast a higher standard of living than Mauritius and Botswana. Now the economies of PNG and Nauru are on the verge of collapse. Because of its rich mineral deposits PNG could have developed rapidly, but the economy instead stagnated. Per capita income has increased from US$600 in 1970 to US$670 in 1999 (Hughes, 8). When Nauru gained its independence in 1968, each individual was worth US$250,000 as a result of abundant phosphate deposits. Prices rose in the 1970s, making Nauru the second highest income earner in the world. It was at this time that Nauru disregarded its conservative financial advisors. Having now depleted its natural resource, Nauru depends on drug trafficking, money laundering and the sale of passports to keep its fledgling economy afloat. Kiribati and Tuvalu are likely to suffer a similar fate as Nauru if they do not change their investment routines for income gained by phosphate reserves. Though Fiji does not suffer from resource marginalisation, it nonetheless has an unemployment rate of twenty percent. The minute economic development pits the Fijians against the Fijian Indians, which agitates an existing civil disorder and inequality in the island. Financial profits from a dwindling timber industry in the Solomon Islands benefits a small and corrupt elite.

Politicians and economists continually argue over the likelihood of an economically 'independent' South Pacific. Economists tend to argue that in choosing economic and political policies appropriate to their size and population, the islands can gain independence from foreign aid flows. Hughes argues that PNG and Fiji, with populations measuring one million and five million respectively, are able "to govern themselves independently if they adopt [appropriate] government structures … if they engage modestly in international affairs and if they opt for pro-growth policies" (ibid., 3). Governmental bureaucracies are presently far too big to be efficient or cost-effective. They are tailored to support a few elites that are

unwilling to restructure the funding and composition of government departments. Adopting economic strategies from Norfolk Island, which does not receive any aid and has a per capita income twice that of Australia, could be beneficial (ibid.).

Those that contend that the islands cannot gain economic independence list geography, ethnic cleavages and conflict, governmental corruption, natural resource depletion, and trade inequality as just a few variables that keep the islands from gaining such an idealistic status. To begin, land areas are often small and moreover, fragmented, dispersed, and spatially distant from metropolitan areas. Tuvalu is for example, a nation of 26 square kilometres, spread over 560 kilometres of ocean on nine coral atolls. "Geography is reinforced by economics and technological change: isolated island communities supply and demand little cargo, so that frequent and regular shipping services are not commercially sustainable, and high internal and external transport costs are a constraint on the development of domestic markets and export opportunities" (ibid., p.229). The region's vulnerability to natural disasters such as hurricanes and tidal waves is capable of crippling their economies as well. In 1960 a hurricane displaced 4000 of Niue's 4780 inhabitants and destroyed the copra production for two years (Ward, 1967, p.83). In fact, there are many obstacles that keep the islands from progressing in such a manner – and all added together, make the goal infinity harder to achieve. Nonetheless, there are measures that could be taken to revive faltering economies and generally make the islands less dependent.

Islanders and donors must first realize how traditional beliefs have stifled economic progress in the region. Communal land ownership, clan loyalty and limited working hours give a sense of security – no one goes hungry. Unfortunately, communal land ownership, which is primarily supported by chiefly organisation, prevents individual entrepreneurship. Land reform has historically benefited some more than others, and yet the transition to private property rights in open societies has led to benefits for the lowest income households that definitively outweighed the option to maintain communal land ownership. Clan loyalty creates an informal welfare state by providing for the unemployed, but in doing so, impedes upon the entrepreneurial principles of saving and investing – practices which stimulate an open and viable marketplace.

Crime must also be curtailed to stimulate island economies. Hughes argues that "the violence that was endemic in Pacific societies was held at bay during the colonial era by the imposition of security, and probably more importantly, by rising living standards" (ibid., 12). Since independence, depreciating economies and weak legal fabrics have allowed the occurrences of unemployment and crime to grow. Crime has impacted upon a potentially successful tourist industry, and corruption at a governmental level has hurt foreign investment in the island industries.

Welfare and statist policies are two other problems. Like many nations after World War II, both the Australian and New Zealand governments tampered with policies that reflected interests in establishing welfare and unionised states. Advisors from both nations advocated similar policies in their Pacific colonies. Eventually New Zealand and Australia reformed policy in order to stimulate their weak economies but the newly independent Pacific Islanders never reformed. Some governments have tried to adopt new policies that encourage greater market openness, particularly the Morauta Government in PNG, but their efforts have been thwarted by politicians wary of privatisation.

Trade policy could benefit from reform. The islands are involved in three preferential trade arrangements. They were given the General Scheme of Preferences (GSP) by the United Nations to help counteract the high tariffs of industrial nations. The European Economic Community introduced the Lome preferential tariffs for its previous colonial dependencies. The plan gives the islands a privileged quota access to the European Union's heavily protected sugar market. Fiji's clothing industry has also benefited from Lome. Australia (and New Zealand) implemented the Australian Scheme of Preferences with the South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement (SPARTECA), which gives the islands duty free access to Australian markets (ibid., 15). Tariffs in the islands meanwhile approximate forty percent to limit the amount of imported products. Were preferential trading programs to be modified to support greater trade liberalisation, intensified competition might decrease high

unemployment and underemployment rates, and create incentives for savings, entrepreneurship and investment in the island states.

Aid policies are another area to be investigated. Aid given by industrial governments to islands governments without terms of conditionality has harmed island economies and island people. Solutions are varied; mutual obligations could be enforced to ensure that the aid is being used more efficiently, NGOs could redirect aid to specific programmes and initiatives, and alternatively, aid could be cut altogether. The latter option, though it has worked in certain areas, is likely to be too harsh in the islands. Placing mutual agreements and restrictions on aid remittances is likely to be criticized simply because it infringes upon state sovereignty. Redirecting aid by involving NGOs therefore seems like a potential alternative. NGOs can investigate the programmes and initiatives that most need financial assistance. The fisheries of the region are perhaps the islands' most promising financial resource, as they contain ninety percent of the world's commercially exploitable stocks. Seventy percent of the world's tuna is caught in the region (Knapman, 1994, p.330). Unfortunately, the islands are incapable of fully benefiting from the trade; though they hold titles of the area, they are not in the position to farm the seas themselves because of their own economic and technological constraints. They have also been unable to profit from licensing schemes. Research into the prevalence of maritime, oil, and other island resources could prove to be a lucrative investment for those islands that lack a domestic product or market-base. Giving aid to those programmes is likely to stimulate local economies and civil societies by employing a local workforce. The evolution of niche markets in the area could also fuel a stagnant economy, especially for those islands that do not profit from the tourist and maritime industries. Establishing niche markets would require a unique island flavour or expertise, but could be created were an impetus for production and education available. Redirecting the aid to these particular projects and groups would avoid dumping in overly stacked government bureaucracies and elite political pockets, emphasize the importance of a liberalized domestic economy, and furthermore, give the islands a kind of economically sovereign integrity that they have never known.

Civil Discontent

The islands, with a few exceptions, are riddled with social cleavages. Ethnic problems exist primarily between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, such as Kanak and French, West Papuan and Indonesian, Fijian and Indian, Maori and Pakeha. However, as demonstrated by Papua New Guinea's tribal wars and the civil war in Bougainville, the most pervasive conflicts are between the various indigenous groups that inhabit the islands. Rusiante Nayacakalou has argued that the basis for Fijian unity was their shared negative opinion of Indians, but if that threat reduced, tensions between Fijian tribes would become a major political problem (Crocombe, p.442). Since the 1987 coup that reduced Fijian-Indian government representation, a growing tribal identification has arisen in Fiji. As Nayacakalou predicted, new provincial and tribal delineations have fostered intra-tribal tension.

Papua New Guinea's large number of social cleavages must be overcome before nation building can occur. PNG is a nation of 4.8 million people who speak over 800 languages. They are poorly educated and mostly disenfranchised. They also suffer from the arbitrary boundaries imparted on them by their colonial rulers. Though there is neither geographic nor cultural logic behind the boundary that splits the island, PNG and Indonesia spend millions a year defending it. Bougainville represents the greatest colonial deficiency; after multiple trade agreements during the early twentieth century, PNG's prominent politician, Sir John Guise asked that Bougainville be granted its independence. Neither Australia (its colonial ruler at the time) nor PNG officials would listen to his demands because they were concerned about administering and profiting from the newly operational copper mines in Panguna. Cooper extraction would develop the local economy and consequently, reduce the amount of aid Australia was currently subsidizing. They were also concerned that were Bougainville to be given its independence, other regions of PNG would too look for more autonomy. Financial concessions were made but civil war erupted in 1989 nonetheless. When the war ended in 1997, approximately twenty thousand lives had been lost. Though the particular players and conflicts differ, the majority of the islands have experienced similar civil and political strife because of their inability to make order of ethnic diversity.

Government and non-government policy-makers must also address poor education standards. Spending on education generally increased following independence; former colonists increased previous aid remittances, and entrepreneurs that sought greater influence in the islands offered generous donations. Meanwhile, international organisations such as the World Health Organisation provided outlets for professional training. Standards increased most dramatically in the newly formed territories because they had greater access to advanced technological and human resources. Conversely, independent states try to manage with their national budget restraints. A study conducted by Ron Crocombe found that in its effort to boost tourism, the government of the Cook Islands gave a rate of subsidy per room to its three tourist hotels that averaged over 100 times the expenditure per child on education (ibid., p.353). To compound the disparity between the islands, residents of the territories have had greater access to education abroad. A 1990-91 UNESCO study reported that 40 percent of nine and ten year-olds in the Pacific Islands had not made 'a significant start' in reading or writing English despite four years of schooling (ibid., p.240). While the quality of education has generally increased in the islands, it still falls well below the standards of their diplomatic partners. The islands lack the funds and technology that the Pacific Rim nations, Australia, New Zealand and United States have. As a result, students are forced to seek commercial education and as few can afford the costs, the disparity of education, skill sets and financial standing continues to grow between the social classes in the islands.

High unemployment in the islands is another major social problem. The few islanders that receive graduate degrees can find jobs in politics or the business sector – but even those are scarce. The situation is worse for the majority of the population; their scant education gives few professional options, and limited resources prevent economies from supporting enough labour positions. To meet employment demands, the islands have actively sought foreign investment, but many international corporations are cautious to invest in the islands because of their limited markets, geographic distance, high unit costs and corrupt governments (ibid., p.341). To exacerbate the problem, immigrants (primarily from Asia) have come to the islands for employment and with their strong work ethic, have systematically taken many of the base jobs islander populations once had. Even in Guam, the Northern Marianas and Palau, where tourism and manufacturing industries provide more jobs than island populations can support, indigenous people have high rates of unemployment. Employers find that Asians work harder, for longer hours, and for less pay (ibid., p.397). A desire to emigrate is the common response from islanders, especially by those who are well educated and come from independent states. A 1992 study showed that 35 to 40 percent of university graduates from Tonga, Fiji and Samoa emigrated. Unskilled labourers from islands that have privileged access to metropolitan states, such the Marshall Islands, the Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau, often seek employment in Australia, New Zealand and the United States because they can find work in those places for five times the pay (ibid., p.65). Until local governments and locally active NGOs find ways to counter unemployment, the island infrastructure will be inundated with mass emigration, growing crime rates and civil unrest.

Much of the rampant crime in the islands is a manifestation of poor education and unemployment. As has been mentioned before, limited education and employment opportunities have led to a stratified social hierarchy in the islands and the disparity of wealth has inspired negative social responses. One of the most obvious cases is in Papua New Guinea, where it is estimated that 32,000 or 14.8 percent of urban dwellers depend on crime for their livelihood (ibid., p.41). Some crime is clearly a backlash to the islands' social problems. The PNG's *raskol* gangs, for example, react to corruption, poverty and social stratification, by stealing from the wealthy and giving to their followers. However, their aims are contradictory to the extent that they rape, steal from and commit violence on the poor. They also work with organized crime abroad and local politicians (ibid.). Church and voluntary groups have tried to reform members of these gangs but the pressure on them to band together to earn a living for their families has proven to be more lucrative; after all, the chances of being caught are minimal and the rewards of crime are much greater than those of low-paying jobs for unskilled labourers.

The advent of robust civil societies in developed nations in the past century has profoundly altered the role of state governance. 'Civil societies', including many forms of community organisation,

such as media, churches, unions, universities, professional associations and volunteer associations have formed and assumed responsibility for community development, governance, and process. They are "separate from, and independent of, both the state and the market" and are concerned with "the relationship of the individual, social institutions and non-government organisations to both the state and the market" (ibid., p.543). The development of proactive civil societies in the islands could create tighter communities, more productive workplaces and a more educated populace. International NGOs (particularly Greenpeace and the Red Cross) have successfully developed local community action groups and influenced government legislation. Corporate-sponsored task forces have been another facet of civil society. Mining companies in Papua New Guinea have for instance, intervened in the public sector by providing roads, schools, health centres and other public services that the government has been unable to provide (ibid., p.558). Identifying local interests and concerns, and creating groups that represent those interests could ameliorate the deleterious effects of colonization on island community organisation.

'Sovereignty' and Regional Organisation

Regional organisation was developed to deal with the post-colonial international environment. Though its success was limited, regional organisations attempted to increase economic development and regional independence. Colonial powers advocated greater regional organisation so that they could cut their own administrative expenses. The primary intention was to create economic partnerships that would encourage financial growth, but island governments fashioned policies that were too introspective. Pacific regionalism has been very nationalistic, particularly in focusing development on export-enhancing initiatives (ibid., p.284).

In 1947 the Pacific Islands established the South Pacific Commission (SPC), the first intergovernmental organisation in the South Pacific. New Zealand and Australia wanted to establish regional cohesiveness and they gained approval of the international community when it was realized that the goals of the SPC were to mirror those of the Atlantic Charter. Developed to appease the national interests of its colonial leaders, the SPC was limited in scope and authority, and was soon sidestepped to create more effective regional cooperation. In 1965 Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa worked outside the organisation's framework when they established higher commodity prices for their agricultural exports. Their efforts resulted in the establishment of the Pacific Islands Producers' Association, the first indigenous intergovernmental organisation (ibid., p.285).

As the 1960s progressed so too did impatience with the SPC. In August 1971, island leaders met in Australia and New Zealand to discuss organisational alternatives. They established the South Pacific Forum, an agency with no technically binding legal obligations, but with sufficient influence to govern regional affairs in the 1970s and 1980s. At its second meeting in 1972, the Forum members created a corollary organisation called the South Pacific Bureau of Economic Cooperation (SPEC). The organisation of SPEC was jeopardized in 1978 when members of the Forum created the Forum Fisheries Agency. The latter organisation compromised the authority of SPEC by assuming its responsibilities and jurisdictions, and once again affirmed the complexities of South Pacific regionalism. These organisations were manifestations of island bonding and mechanisms for delineating cultural differences. Ironically non-island governments funded approximately 90 percent of the costs for Pacific regional organisation. By the 1990s, substantial reform had taken place in the islands and new organisations were forming, including the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Pacific Forum Line and the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone. A fundamental shift took place in the late 1980s, beginning with the 1987 military coup in Fiji. Leaders abandoned the introspective orientation of earlier regional decisions and mobilized island organisations to engage more regularly in international affairs. They were influenced by the guiding principles of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), a newly formed organisation which was successfully strengthening open markets (and consequently democratising governments) in the region at the time.

Since the demise of the Cold War, South Pacific regionalism has continued to evolve. Large states have effectively protected their national interests in regional organisations. Smaller, more vulnerable states have on the other hand, sought support from New Zealand, Australia, the United States and

France to represent their interests, and have thus been reluctant to abolish any agencies of extra-regional state influence (ibid., p.298). Islanders currently envisage closer relationships with Asian nations but their representative access is minimal in both the Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Group. If larger states such as Papua New Guinea and Fiji gain their own national representation in the organisations, smaller and more unstable Pacific islands are likely to lose what little representation they presently have.

In October 2000 leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum decided to strengthen governance standards expected of member states and created the Biketawa Declaration. The declaration was the result of extensive meetings held in August 2000 to deal with the growing security crises in Fiji and the Solomon Islands. For the first time, forum leaders decided that a set of principles should be drafted, allowing the Forum to take definitive action should another crisis occur in the future. Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexander Downer argued that the declaration represented "a milestone in forum relations by providing a mechanism through which it can call on members to uphold democratic principles and to take certain actions, including targeted measures, if a member state breaches those principles" (Downer, 2000). Though the declaration points to greater regional organisation, the islands must still adopt greater cooperative coherence in dealing with maritime, trade and security issues.

Island intergovernmental cooperation can best be used to tackle many of the other endemic island problems. Poor governance, weak political institutions, economic decline and civil discontent are issues that most of the islands need to confront and doing so as a community may prove to be helpful. The role of tradition in social intercourse must be adjusted before any action can be taken to resolve socio-political and socio-economic problems. Social hierarchy is one of multiple proverbial ideologies that prevent political liberalization and economic development from occurring. Were islanders to understand that they can maintain some tradition and meanwhile endeavour to be more socially progressive, they would ultimately learn to expect more from their political leaders – adherence to democratic principles and accountability to the citizenry. A new framework would help to modernize island economies, and consequently empower governments to more realistically finance health care, education and other essential social services.

Conclusion

Democratic development policy is hard to implement in the Pacific Islands for various political and social reasons. To begin, policy-makers tread lightly around issues of political incorrectness. Western governments feel uneasy about imposing policy on the island states because it is the consequence of their inadequate colonial treatment of the islands that necessitates adoption of such policy. The islands routinely criticize western governments, particularly the United States, for infringing upon their sovereignty, yet their continual request for aid inherently reiterates their dependency. To gain more autonomy, the islands must first fashion their state infrastructures and regional organisations to support viable economies and democratic governments. Doing so will shrink the flow of aid remittances and halt criminal and terrorist organisation in the region, and ultimately establish the Pacific Islands as developed nation-states, entitled to being, without sovereign infringement.

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