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***CIVIL DISORDER AND INSECURITY WITHIN FIJI: AN ANALYSIS OF CAUSES,
EFFECTS, AND AN ARGUMENT FOR FUTURE NEW ZEALAND STRATEGIC
POLICY***

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

The thesis provides an analysis of the causes and effects of civil disorder and internal insecurity within Fiji. By understanding these influences, and New Zealand's desired strategic endgame in regards to the future of Fiji, an argument will be provided for strategic policy that New Zealand may pursue in regards to future interface with Fiji. While each particular coup and mutiny that has occurred within Fiji in recent history has been widely documented, a comprehensive analysis of the causes of each incident has not. The thesis examines the importance of Fiji to New Zealand (and Australia), and leads the reader through an analysis of race relations, history and culture as a means to expose some of the contributing factors regarding civil disorder and insecurity in Fiji. The thesis then progresses to examine the series of coups and mutiny that have occurred between the period of 1987 and 2006, prior to analyzing possible risks and consequences that may result from the current political situation in Fiji. The thesis will conclude with an argument for New Zealand's recommended policy towards Fiji that will help to achieve New Zealand's desired strategic endgame in regards to the future relationship with that nation.

Fiji is not a failed state however, as a nation it is in a position of economic and political degradation, while the current attitude, capability and direction of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) is also of some concern. Fiji has become isolated from traditional allies such as New Zealand and Australia and now looks to some larger Asian nations for support under Commodore Bainimarama's 'Look North' Policy. The future of strategic affairs and international relations that may result from the current situation in Fiji does create some potential risks within the South Pacific region, not to mention the future economy and standard of living for the population of Fiji. Given the current situation, and a proposed future democratic election in 2014, Fiji sits at a political cross-road. The

current militarisation of the Fiji Government is not ethical and the result of Bainimarama's planned general election is yet to be determined. However, once Fiji has irreversibly committed to pursuing democracy, New Zealand should seize the opportunity to decisively and comprehensively renew links with Fiji. Options for this engagement include a progressive, whole of government approach utilising prudent application of all of the instruments of national power in an integrated manner.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABCA	America Britain Canada Australia.
ADF	Australian Defence Force.
ALTA	Agricultural Landlord and Tenants Act.
ANC	Armed Native Constabulary.
ANZUS	Australia New Zealand United States.
CAMV	Conservative Alliance Matanitu Vanua (Fiji political party).
CEDAW	Commission for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.
CRWU	Counter Revolutionary Warfare Unit.
DCM	Distinguished Conduct Medal.
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone.
FDF	Fiji Defence Force.
FIBOS	Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics.
FIR	Fiji Infantry Regiment.
FMF	Fiji Military Forces.
FPDA	Five Power Defence Agreement.
GCC	Great Council of Chiefs.
HADR	Humanitarian and Disaster Relief.
HF	High Frequency.
INTERFET	International Force for East Timor.
INTERPOL	International Police.
MATT	Mutual Assistance Training Team.
MBE	Medal for the Order of the British Empire.
MC	Military Cross.
MM	Military Medal.
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.
NCBBF	National Council for Building a Better Fiji.
NCO	Non Commissioned Officer
NZDF	New Zealand Defence Force.
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance.
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
PLA	Peoples Liberation Army.
PLAN	Peoples Liberation Army Navy.
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission Solomon Islands.
RAN	Royal Australian Navy.
RFMF	Republic of Fiji Military Forces.
RNZAF	Royal New Zealand Air Force.
RTU	Promotion of Reconciliation, Tolerance and Unity Bill.
SAR.	Search and Rescue Operations.
SAS	Special Air Service.
SATCOM	Satellite Communications.
SDL	Soqosoqo Duavata Lewenivanua (Fiji political party).
SPE	Services Protected Evacuation.
SVT	Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei (Fiji political party).
UHF	Ultra High Frequency.
US	United States of America.
VC	Victoria Cross.
VHF	Very High Frequency.
2 nd NZEF	2 nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force.

CIVIL DISORDER AND INSECURITY WITHIN FIJI: AN ANALYSIS OF CAUSES, EFFECTS, AND AN ARGUMENT FOR FUTURE NEW ZEALAND STRATEGIC POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Fiji as a South Pacific nation, shares a similar geographic space to that of New Zealand and Australia. New Zealand's sea lines of communication, vital for the nation's economic survival, pass close to Fiji. Both nations share similar history and culture in regards to colonial settlement and a multi-cultural society. Fiji and New Zealand share an economic focus on trade, harvest of natural resources, and a certain reliance on tourism in order to maintain economic viability. Until recent times, Fiji and New Zealand enjoyed close political connections and military links, with the military forces of both nations having worked in close partnership during past conflicts and military operations. Fiji's proximity to New Zealand also provides the latter nation with a practical and ethical responsibility to support an adequate level of governance, civil order, security and human rights within Fiji. It is in New Zealand's favour to ensure that these criteria are met, given that Fiji is situated within New Zealand's strategic area of interest, and as a major nation state in Oceania sets a tone for regional stability. The New Zealand Government has maintained the stance that the nation requires to retain economic, political, security, environmental and human rights interests within the South Pacific region at all times.¹ This factor is reflected by the opinion and actions of the New Zealand Government following each example of civil disorder that has occurred within Fiji since the first coup d' etat, conducted by Lieutenant Colonel Sitivini Rabuka, in 1987.

¹ "Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade," New Zealand Government, accessed 11 February 2011, www.mfat.govt.nz.

Fiji has been subject to a unique set of circumstances throughout its history that have shaped it as the nation it is today. Throughout this thesis, some of these historical, cultural and political factors will be examined in order to explain the political and cultural shape of contemporary Fiji. The thesis will then progress to explain some specific problems, while also providing some recommendations as to how New Zealand can positively influence Fiji in the future. Throughout the thesis, particular attention has been focused on the role and conduct of the RFMF. This focus reflects the fact that the RFMF have acted as key players in each incident of unrest that has occurred within Fiji since 1987. The Fiji Interim Government is an organisation heavily dominated by the military, and one that has remained in power since December 2006. Therefore, the RFMF are partly responsible for the problems currently faced by Fiji, yet will also form part of some possible solutions that the thesis will suggest. The aim of the thesis is to provide an analysis of the causes and effects of civil disorder and internal insecurity within Fiji. By understanding these influences, and New Zealand's desired strategic endgame in regards to the future of Fiji, an argument will be provided for strategic policy that New Zealand may pursue in regards to future interface with Fiji.

Some may hold the opinion that Fiji domestic concerns are an internal matter, and should not be influenced by foreign powers such as New Zealand or Australia. The question might be asked: *'why should New Zealand take such an overt interest regarding the internal affairs of Fiji as a nation?'* Furthermore, *'why should New Zealand be particularly concerned regarding the real or perceived status of Fiji's physical and economic security, standard of human rights and standard of governance?'* These questions will be addressed in the thesis, particularly in Chapter 1, which explains the strategic importance of Fiji to New Zealand, and also in Chapter 7. However, one of the

key factors that helps put New Zealand's more specific interests within Fiji into a broader context is the perspective of geography. Fiji is located some 2000 kilometres north of New Zealand. Australia is a similar distance away. Both Australia and New Zealand are the largest developed powers closest to Fiji. Fiji's geographic proximity to New Zealand has ensured various linkages between the two nations including those involving economic, cultural, sporting, and security related factors. Fiji also sits astride significant electronic, air and sea lines of communication across the South Pacific, which includes electronic cable communications. These communication mediums are widely utilised by New Zealand and as such, must remain secure. Fiji possesses a resource-rich exclusive economic zone. Fiji's deep-water harbour in Suva and other anchorages and international airfields, indicate that Fiji is a key logistic, economic and political hub within the South Pacific. Should any form of catastrophe strike Fiji, it would be likely that both Australia and New Zealand would be at the forefront of any significant support efforts. In this thesis the role that New Zealand may play in regards to the future of Fiji will be a focus, rather than that of Australia.

The more significant international players within the Asia-Pacific are carefully observing the dynamics of security and international relations within the region, and are crafting strategic policy accordingly. The United States of America (US) have a muted policy towards Fiji, and have traditionally taken the lead of allied nations in the region, given the direct impact on their national interests.² However, it is more likely that the rise of China and India will draw much of the international attention within the Asia-Pacific region in the medium-term, not to mention a cluster of other Asian powers such as Japan, Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Taiwan and Singapore. The US would prefer regional

² "US Policy towards Fiji," US Government, accessed 18 March 2013, <http://suva.us.embassy.gov>

friends such as New Zealand and Australia to secure the South Pacific / Oceania region, allowing them to focus attention on their national interests in Asia. Throughout the thesis, a recurring theme drawn from analysis, is that Fiji is of strategic concern to New Zealand. For better or worse, the future of Fiji will have some direct or in-direct consequence upon New Zealand.

Chapter 1 will examine the strategic importance of Fiji within New Zealand's area of interest. Chapter 2 will examine historical tensions that exist between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians. During the periods of civil disorder and insecurity that have occurred in Fiji since the coups of 1987, the subject of race relations has been misinterpreted and in some cases, manipulated by some key internal players. While the subject of race relations between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians has been a significant factor contributing towards the issue of internal insecurity, it is by no means the only factor. As Chapter 2 and Chapter 5 will help to explain, the subject of race relations within Fiji is not the only catalyst that has contributed towards incidents of internal disorder and insecurity.

In Chapter 3, the history of the RFMF will be examined in a manner to help explain the context of the current situation, where Fiji is under direct military rule in the form of the Interim Government. The RFMF plays a dominant and pivotal role within contemporary Fiji politics and society. The context is important, as the RFMF will likely continue to be a key player within domestic Fijian affairs for many years to come. The connection and affiliation enjoyed between the NZDF and the RFMF will also be examined in Chapter 3. The relationship has been important historically, but also potentially could play a pivotal role in the re-building of the Fiji – New Zealand relationship in the future, as well as

normalising the legitimate role of Fiji's armed forces in its society, which will assist in providing national stability.

Chapter 4 will analyse indigenous Fiji culture and explain how Fiji traditions and tribal structures continue to influence politics. The analysis of indigenous Fiji culture and traditions helps to explain the links maintained in Fiji between the military and the political realm, and the dominant role that the RFMF maintains.

In Chapter 5, the series of coups and mutiny that have occurred within Fiji since 1987 will be analysed. This will consider the motives and causes of these manifestations of internal insecurity, with deductions drawn that may imply the courses to follow to help avoid similar mistakes in the future.

Chapter 6 will analyse a series of official strategic level documents released by Commodore Bainimarama and his government, regarding his vision for the future of Fiji and the RFMF. These documents provide some insights into Bainimarama's strategic vision and endgame for the future of Fiji. Consideration will be given regarding the pragmatism and validity of these documents.

Chapter 7 analyses Fiji's isolation from New Zealand under Bainimarama's rule, including the possible adverse effects this has had on the Fiji economy, governance and level of security. It is in this Chapter that the potential risks to physical and economic security within Fiji under the current regime will be examined. Chapter 8 will provide some possible policy recommendations for the New Zealand Government to consider regarding future engagement with Fiji, including some possible courses of action.

Lastly, the conclusion will draw together arguments presented within the thesis and emphasise key deductions made. It is argued that the current state of governance within Fiji, under the rule of Bainimarama, is illegitimate. The New Zealand Government severed ties with Bainimarama's regime, and this stance will no doubt be extant until such point that the return to democracy within Fiji is carried through. It is important to note that the negative results linked to an isolated Fiji (from New Zealand) are significant and that in this regard, Fiji is at a political cross-road, where its future direction is uncertain. Therefore, it is suggested that once Fiji returns to democracy, New Zealand should rapidly and decisively attempt to fully re-engage with Fiji utilising a comprehensive and synchronised application of the instruments of national power including use of diplomacy, the military, and economic means. These instruments of national power would be utilised in a manner to pursue New Zealand's desired endgame that includes a friendly, prosperous, stable and democratic Fiji. It is implied that what occurs between now and the desired endgame is a fluid situation.

CHAPTER 1

THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF FIJI WITHIN NEW ZEALAND'S AREA OF INTEREST

Fiji is of direct strategic concern to New Zealand mainly due to its geographic proximity, and because Fiji provides a key logistic and communication node that forms part of, or lies adjacent to, New Zealand's sea and electronic (cable) lines of communication. Fiji is situated within New Zealand's strategic area of interest, and occupies a geographically important space within the South Pacific. Fiji maintains a sizable armed forces. Should any significant security issues occur within Fiji at any point in the future, New Zealand and Australia will have a practical and ethical interest in resolving the problem.

Fiji is centrally located within the South Pacific Ocean, midway between the South Pole and the Equator. Fiji is located between longitudes 174 degrees East and 178 degree's West of Greenwich, and latitudes 12 degree's South and 22 degree's South. Fiji sits close to the island nations of Vanuatu and Tonga. Fiji consists of 332 islands with 110 being inhabited. Viti Levu is the most significant land mass, with Vanua Levu being the second largest island. Fiji's geographic area covers some 1.3 million square kilometres, and has a total land mass of 18,333 square kilometres. Fiji is heavily influenced by the maritime environment with the country having a total combined coastline of 1,129 kilometres.¹ Fiji's maritime jurisdiction includes a territorial sea of 12 nautical miles, an exclusive economic zone of 200 nautical miles, and an economic claim on the continental shelf. Fiji's capital city Suva, is located on the principal island of Viti Levu. Fiji has an estimated population of 875,983 as at July 2010, with approximately 580,000 people

¹. "Australia-Oceania: Fiji," CIA World Fact Book, accessed 22 February 2011, <https://www.cia.gov>.

residing on the island of Viti Levu.² Approximately 7000 indigenous Fijians reside in New Zealand, linking both countries in a cultural context.³

Fiji has a total of twenty eight airports, with the principal terminals at Nadi, Nausori (Suva), and Labasa. Nadi is located on the western side of the island of Viti Levu, and is the principal international airport of Fiji, receiving a large number of tourists. Nadi airport has direct flights to and from fifteen other countries within the Asia-Pacific region. Nausori Airport is the alternative international airport of Fiji and is located twenty five kilometres north of Suva. In 2010 approximately 700,000 international travellers (mainly tourists) visited or transited through Fiji.⁴ These figures indicate an economy heavily reliant on tourism, and the fact that for the majority of the time, a large number of foreign nationals will be resident within Fiji.

Fiji has three significant commercial maritime port terminals; these being Lautoka, Levuka, and Suva. Lautoka and Suva harbours are located on the principal island of Viti Levu, with Levuka located on the island of Ovalau. These ports support trade, and house many of the nation's fishing and ferry vessels. Suva harbour is the most significant deep water port in Fiji, with the majority of maritime trade being conducted from this location. Imports and exports in 2009 (mainly conducted by maritime means) have been summarised in the following tables:

² "Australia-Oceania: Fiji," CIA World Fact Book, accessed 22 February 2011, <https://www.cia.gov>.

³ "Fijian People In New Zealand," New Zealand Government, accessed 13 February 2011, newzealand.govt.nz.

⁴ "Fiji Islands Bureau Of Statistics – Aircraft Statistics," Fiji Government, accessed 14 Feb 2011, www.fiji.gov.fj.

FIJI GROSS IMPORTS 2009

<u>Imports (Fiji \$ Million)</u>	
Food	\$522
Beverages and Tobacco	\$23
Crude Materials	\$25
Mineral Fuels	\$720
Animal and Vegetable Oil	\$29
Chemicals	\$225
Manufactured Goods	\$404
Machinery and Transport Equipment	\$605
Miscellaneous Articles	\$241
Other Commodities	\$14
TOTAL IMPORTS	\$2808

FJI GROSS EXPORTS 2009

<u>Exports (Fiji \$ Million)</u>	
Food	\$456
Beverages and Tobacco	\$87
Crude Materials	\$50
Mineral Fuels	\$-
Animal and Vegetable Oil	\$7
Chemicals	\$27
Manufactured Goods	\$51
Machinery and Transport Equipment	\$22
Miscellaneous Articles	\$100
Other Commodities	\$95
TOTAL EXPORTS	\$895⁵

An analysis of the above information indicates a nation that relies on imported goods to supplement its lack of manufacturing, and ability to produce mineral fuels. Fiji's exports are dominated by food, mostly fish and sugar cane. It suggests that Fiji is unlikely to have a robust economy and probably relies on revenue gained through tourism, farming and commercial fishing sectors to maintain economic viability.

From a security point of view, the South Pacific has been described as being of 'direct strategic concern' to both Australia and New Zealand.⁶ Fiji is situated in close proximity

⁵ "Fiji Islands Bureau Of Statistic - Fiji Facts and Figures as at 1st July 2010," Fiji Government, accessed 14 Feb 2011, www.fiji.gov.fj.

to New Zealand and it is in the latter nation's best interests that Fiji maintains adequate levels of governance and security. This factor is relevant when considering any security contingencies that may occur within the South Pacific or in any other areas of close proximity, and is reflected by both the Australian and New Zealand Defence White Papers.⁷ In 1999 the humanitarian disaster experienced within East Timor was initially resolved by an Australian-led military operation, which also included a significant contribution from the NZDF.⁸ Although East Timor is not situated within the South Pacific, the nation does exist in relatively close physical proximity to New Zealand, and it was a factor that helped shape New Zealand's significant response to this crisis. This situation has been termed as 'the burden of response', which infers that any humanitarian or security issues occurring within close physical proximity to Oceania are likely to be resolved by Australia and New Zealand, due to the fact that they are the two major powers in the region.⁹ Other nations such as the US are likely to focus their resources on more important national interests. Such contingencies could include the threat of conventional war, the global war on terror, or any other security matters encountered within their strategic area of interest.

New Zealand relies heavily on economic trade with other nations. Approximately 98% of New Zealand's trade is conducted via shipping vessels, with 70% of this commerce associated with countries belonging to the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation.¹⁰ In terms of economic viability and survival, the protection of sea lines of communication within the

⁶ Shibuya, E, *Security in Oceania in the 21st Century*, (Honolulu, Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies, 2003), 125.

⁷ New Zealand Government, *"Defence White Paper,"* (Wellington, New Zealand Government, 2010), Executive Summary, Chapter 1.

⁸ Mapp, W, "In Defence of Our Interests", *New Zealand International Review XXXV*, no.1 (2010), 8.

⁹ Shibuya, *Security in Oceania in the 21st Century*, (Honolulu, Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies, 2003), 128.

¹⁰ "Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade," New Zealand Government, accessed 11 February 2011, www.mfat.govt.nz.

South Pacific is of paramount concern to New Zealand. Challenges relating to instability or security within the South Pacific may directly affect New Zealand in some manner, if only from an economic view point. The New Zealand Government has stipulated the requirement to retain security, political, economic, environmental and human rights interests within the South Pacific region.¹¹

New Zealand has long recognised the strategic importance of Fiji. At the outbreak of the Second World War, New Zealand rapidly reinforced Fiji with elements of the 3rd Division, 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force (2nd NZEF), and the Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF). It was the initiative of the New Zealand Government at the outbreak of the Second World War, that Nadi and Nausori airports were constructed. During the War, the New Zealand Government was cognisant of the fact that Fiji was within bomber aircraft range of New Zealand, and its deep water harbour at Suva was an anchorage that needed to be secured. Whoever held Fiji possessed an important logistic and military hub within the South Pacific. It was particularly relevant in the 1940's when aircraft range was limited and Fiji provided an air link between Australasia, North America and the Asia-Pacific region. The importance of Fiji to the Allied operations within the South Pacific theatre was significant and a factor widely recognised by opposing forces. Both sides had significant designs for the islands of Fiji. However, history fortunately dictated that the Allies prevailed.¹²

Contemporary aircraft and maritime vessel range has increased considerably and Fiji remains an important economic and logistics node within the South Pacific. Fiji has also

¹¹ "Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade," New Zealand Government, accessed 11 February 2011, www.mfat.govt.nz.

¹² Lowry, R.W, *Fortress Fiji: Holding the Line in the Pacific War, 1939-45*, (Sydney, R.W. Lowry, 2006), 18.

now become host to international electronic communications, with cable communications passing through Fiji territory. From a military view point, Fiji is also important. If threats ever became manifest across the South Pacific, it would be of significant interest that Fiji remained in 'friendly hands,' given its proximity to New Zealand and Australia. When considering non-conventional threats, such as are posed by trans-national crime, Fiji's porous border and significant trade and people movements make it vulnerable to exploitation. Any threats regarding civil order within Fiji, including those posed by trans-national crime, increase the chances of a flow on effect within New Zealand via the physical (transport and trade) links that exist between Fiji and New Zealand. Lastly, the paradigm described as 'the burden of response' suggests that future problems regarding security and internal instability within Fiji may be left to Australia and New Zealand to solve should the Fiji authorities be unable to do so without assistance from outside. This factor was illustrated in the New Zealand Government's response to the 1987 coup in Fiji, whereby the Prime Minister of the day, Mr David Lange, issued the following instruction to the Chief of Defence Staff;

I hereby instruct you to despatch immediately a RNZAF C130 aircraft with sufficient military personnel aboard to act as required to protect New Zealand's interests in Fiji'.¹³

New Zealand and Fiji have economic ties that include two-way imports and exports. Both nations also share historical, sporting and cultural similarities and interests, including a significant population of indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians that currently reside in New Zealand.

¹³ Crowley, G,J, "New Zealand's Response To The Aircraft Hijack Incident During The 1987 Coup D' Etat In Fiji: A Study Of Civil-Military Relations In Crisis", (MA Thesis, Massey University, 2002),46.

The New Zealand Government acknowledges both Commonwealth and Pacific Island Forum principles in respect to the requirement to maintain good levels of governance. As such, the New Zealand Government acknowledges the requirement to consider remedial measures in regards to regimes such as Fiji, who fail to adhere to democratically accepted principles.

Throughout history, the New Zealand Government has been willing to support the Government of Fiji, as long as the latter has maintained adequate levels of governance, and has adhered to democracy. Clearly, since the first coup of 1987 these requirements have not always been met by the Fiji Government, and during periods within the past twenty five years, New Zealand support to Fiji has been restricted. New Zealand Government support to Fiji has included the provision of financial aid, military support, and political support (particularly in regards to the promotion and protection of human rights and support to democratic conventions). The New Zealand Government's current isolationist stance towards Fiji that has been maintained since the 2006 coup is a response to the autocratic and militaristic nature of the Fiji Interim Government.¹⁴

New Zealand has concerns regarding the negative impact that the 2006 coup within Fiji has had on regional stability, particularly given Fiji's central location within the South Pacific and its hosting of regional organisations. Similar concerns are held by other nations within the South Pacific, particularly Australia and some nations of the Pacific Islands Forum. Fiji is strategically important to New Zealand. The future of Fiji will directly affect New Zealand.

¹⁴ "Frequently asked questions about New Zealand's policy towards Fiji," Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand Government, accessed 26 February 2011, www.mfat.govt.nz.

CHAPTER 2

RACE RELATIONS WITHIN FIJI BETWEEN INDIGENOUS FIJIANS AND INDO-FIJIANS

Through various incidents of civil disorder that have occurred in Fiji since 1987, the subject of race relations has often been cited as a predominant factor and one of the root causes of many of the problems. However, the issue of race relations has been grossly over-simplified, and has often been described as the only reason for various coups and mutiny that have occurred in Fiji,¹ while this is clearly not the case. This chapter will analyse race relations between Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians. Under consideration is the poor standard of race relations in Fiji.

Fiji's population is dominated by the two main ethnic groups. The indigenous Fijian racial group includes Fijians of both Polynesian and Melanesian lineage, and consists of approximately 57% of the population. The second largest racial group are people of Indo-Fijian extraction, which consist of approximately 38% of the population. A number of other ethnic groups (Rotumans, Europeans, other Pacific Islanders and Chinese) make up the remainder of the population.²

Fiji was formerly part of the British Empire and provided a valuable source of sugar. There was a shortage of labour available to farm this resource, as the indigenous tribes declined to farm sugar cane. Over the period of 1879 – 1919, the British Colonial Administration recruited indentured labourers (termed *Grimitiyas*) from India to work in Fiji on the sugar plantations. During this period some 60,533 Indians were recruited by the British and transported to Fiji. The British refused entry into the indentured labour scheme

¹ Field, M; Baba, T; Nabobo-Baba, U, *Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup*, (Auckland, Reed Publishing Ltd, 2005), 41.

² "Australia-Oceania: Fiji," CIA World Fact Book, accessed 17 March 2011, <https://www.cia.gov.Website>.

of any Indians of warrior caste (e.g. Punjab, Sikhs etc), as a means of reducing the risk of unrest among the indentured labourers. This selective recruiting process arguably shaped the Fijian residents of Indian extraction into a population who were unlikely to seek military service or cause internal problems using force. Indentured labour in Fiji was abolished on 1 January 1920. For many Indo-Fijians, the term *Grimitiyas* is a painful memory in their history. The life of indentured labour endured by the Indo-Fijians was a harsh one, often being described as a refined method of slavery.³

The Indo-Fijian experience was critical in shaping them into the demographic subset of the Fiji population today. It also served to stir racial tension between them, the indigenous Fijian's, and the British Colonial authorities. The *Grimitiyas* worked long hours in arduous conditions, for little pay. In some instances the *Grimitiyas* suffered physical violence as a result of both indigenous Fijian, and European aggression. Suicide was common and the Indo-Fijians were culturally, physically and religiously isolated from both the indigenous Fijians and the Europeans. As a result of their experiences, many Indo-Fijians displayed no loyalty to Britain, and distrusted both the British, and the indigenous Fijians.⁴

When the indentured labour system was abolished, many of the Indo-Fijians leased land off the indigenous Fijians and continued farming sugar cane. Many Indo-Fijians continued to work for the European sugar cane business, the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. In January 1920 Indo-Fijian sugar cane farmers conducted a strike to improve their conditions of service.⁵ Although this form of employment became quite a profitable enterprise for

³ Prasad, R, *Tears in Paradise*, (Auckland, Glade Publishers, 2004), 9.

⁴ *Ibid*, 70-80.

⁵ Ravuvu, A, *Fijians At War*, (Suva, South Pacific Social Sciences Association, 1974), 7.

many Indo-Fijians, the law forbade them from owning land, and they still faced racial segregation until the 1930's. Many Indo-Fijians pursued educational opportunities and opened business operations. Over time, many Indo-Fijians became both wealthy, and well educated, although land ownership was largely denied them.

In the years following the First World War, the Fijian government maintained a small force of Fiji Defence Force (FDF) volunteer territorial troops who conducted training on an annual basis. In January 1920 the FDF was mobilised to act against a strike by Indian workers. This act was considered to be disloyal by indigenous Fijians. Ten years later in 1930, the Indo-Fijian community requested that the Fijian Government allow Indo-Fijian males to join the FDF. The request was declined. In 1933 the Fijian Great Council of Chiefs' (GCC) recommended that the Indo-Fijian population should not be allowed to have any control or influence over military or political matters.⁶ This factor is particularly important given the prestige in which the RFMF has historically been held in Fijian society. The following year, the Fiji Government allowed Indo-Fijian recruits into the FDF, and subsequently a platoon of Indo-Fijians was formed, and remained within the FDF for some years. In 1941, members of the Indo-Fijian FDF platoon formally complained regarding pay and conditions of service (non-European soldiers were paid less than their European peers) and subsequently the platoon was disbanded. An Indo-Fijian representative, Mr Vishnu Deo, declared the loyalty of the Indo-Fijian population to the government of Fiji, however, The Fiji Colonial Secretary observed caustically:

The Indian community showed great zeal and ingenuity in putting forward its claim and its rights and in discovering grievances and slights, but it did not show the same zeal or ingenuity in considering and carrying out its [military service] obligations.⁷

⁶ Ravuvu, A, *Fijians at War*, (Suva, South Pacific Social Sciences Association, 1974), 7.

⁷ *Ibid*, 8.

While the indigenous Fijians provided substantial support to the British effort during the Second World War, it is understood that no Indo-Fijian's engaged in combat operations with the FDF. The lack of Indo-Fijian support to the FDF, and the general war effort in supporting Britain, confirmed the divide between the two racial groups, sowing further seeds of distrust. From this point, indigenous Fijians were adamant that Indo-Fijians should not have a say in Fiji political matters, as they considered Indo-Fijians to be disloyal.

In the post-war period, race relations between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians were at a low point. Many indigenous Fijians did not believe that the Indo-Fijians had any right to influence national politics. Many indigenous Fijians believed Indo-Fijians to be disloyal and treacherous, as a result of their refusal to support the Fijian war effort. Many indigenous Fijians were also jealous of the financial wealth that Indo-Fijians possessed as a result of their business initiatives. The Indo-Fiji population grew rapidly and looked to surpass 50% of the national Fiji population by the mid 1980's. Indigenous Fijians feared they would end up in a similar situation to the Aboriginals of Australia, losing land and power to a non-indigenous ethnic group. In 1987, the Fijian Labour Party, a political party dominated by Indo-Fijians, won the national election. Pressure by nationalist indigenous Fijians, and even more moderate elements, led to a crisis where force was used to reverse the political situation.⁸

Although the political upheavals that began in 1987 will be discussed in Chapter 5, these events further reinforced conflict between Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians. The coup staged by Rabuka in 1987 initiated a significant demographic change within Fiji, which involved the mass exodus out of Fiji of many Indo-Fijians. The Fiji Islands Bureau of

⁸ Field; Baba; Nabobo-Baba, *Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup*, Auckland, Reed Publishing Ltd, 2005, 42.

Statistics (FIBOS) states in a 2009 report, that 50,433 Indo-Fijians permanently departed Fiji during the period 1995 to 2007.⁹ This exodus of an ethnic group out of a nation has been one of the most extreme examples the world has seen in recent decades. The mass emigration of Indo-Fijians from Fiji was largely due to a lack of physical security, and economic uncertainty. Also, discriminatory policies instigated under Rabuka's 1990 constitution, and later coup's, served to exacerbate the concerns held by many Indo-Fijians. During the civil unrest of 2000 some Indo-Fijians were actively persecuted, with some being forced to leave their homes, businesses and farms, as they were threatened with violence and intimidation. The discrimination towards Indo-Fijians was particularly relevant in the Rewa Valley area immediately north of Suva.¹⁰ As a consequence of the upheavals occurring since 1987, race relations within Fiji have deteriorated to the point where a great number of Indo-Fijians have chosen to permanently leave Fiji.

Race relations in Fiji between Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians have always been poor. Although the topic of race relations in Fiji is certainly not the sole factor contributing to the cycle of coups within that nation, it is an important catalyst. Other factors contributing to civil disorder in Fiji have included religion, the quest for financial gain, political aspirations, and a desire to avoid repercussions resulting from illegal activity. Many of these factors will be discussed in Chapter 5. Ironically the current military ruler, Commodore Bainimarama, has gone some way in intentionally improving the state of race-relations within Fiji. However, the differences that exist between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians have deep seated causes, and at best will take some time and effort to resolve.

⁹ Xing, Z, "*Socio-Economic Determinants for Poverty Reduction: The case of Fiji*," (MPhil Thesis, Massey University, 2010), 48.

¹⁰ Gounder, R, "*Dimensions Of Conflict And The Role Of Foreign Aid In Fiji*," (Discussion Paper No. 05.02, Department of Applied and International Economics, Massey University, 2005), 17.

The possibility exists that such racial tension evident within Fiji may never entirely be resolved.

CHAPTER 3

FIJI'S MILITARY HISTORY

Fiji's military history is important, as within indigenous Fiji society, being a member of the military is considered to be a noble form of employment and one that carries significant social and political status. Fiji has always produced high quality soldiers and the RFMF have until recently, maintained close bonds with the NZDF. In the future event that New Zealand and Fiji restore political ties, the defence re-engagement between the NZDF and RFMF may quickly follow. The aim of this chapter is to explain how Fiji military history is linked to the military history of New Zealand, and how this previous friendship may be utilised to help establish a future friendship between the two nations. This chapter will also explain some aspects of militarism within contemporary Fiji politics. Further aspects of the embedded Fiji warrior culture are also explored in Chapter 4.

Prior to sustained contact with Europeans, the military structure in Fiji consisted of a centralised system of *Bati* (warrior groups) controlled by *Turaga* (chiefs). *Bati* were responsible for supporting the needs of their community and *Vanua* (territory) via military force. Periodically two or more *Turaga* would bring together military forces to conquer territory or mitigate an external threat. This normally occurred on an ad-hoc basis. Following the Bau Rewa war of 1843, the victor, Ratu Cakobau, became one of the most influential *Turaga* in Fiji and decided to consolidate power via the centralisation of military forces.¹

Ratu Cakobau formed a government and mobilized a force called the 'Royal Army'. By 1871 the Royal Army consisted of 1000 soldiers. With the assistance of a British military

¹ Ravuvu, *Fijians at War*, Suva, South Pacific Social Sciences Association, 1974, 3-4.

officer, Major Fitzgerald (a veteran of campaigns in India and the Crimea), a rigorous training and regimental regime was established.² Royal Army soldiers were trained by a mixture of British and various expatriate officers, with mainly Fijian non-commissioned officers. The Fijian recruits thrived under the British style regimental and training system, and became adept modern soldiers. The Royal Army became a disciplined military organisation, with a developed chain of command.

In 1872 the Royal Army conducted its first successful military operation. This consisted of an internal security operation against rebellious European settlers in the Levua region. In this situation, the European settlers resisted central political authority having established an informal '*Klu Klux Klan*' organisation with the political objective of resisting Ratu Cakobau. The military operation proved successful in suppressing the European settlers. During 1872 and 1873, the Royal Army also successfully conducted further punitive expeditions against dissidents at Levua and Ba.³ At this time Ratu Cakobau and the Royal Army had established control over various tribes and had managed to exert political and physical power within the wider Fiji area, particularly on Viti Levu, Vanua Levu and within the Lau Archipelago.⁴

At the invitation of the GCC, Fiji became a British Colony. The arrangement was formalised under the Deed of Cession whereby Ratu Cakobau agreed that Fiji should become a member of the British Empire. The Deed of Cession was signed at Levuka on 10

² "Republic of Fiji Military Forces," Fiji Government, accessed 12 Dec 2012, www.fiji.gov.fj.

³ Halapua, W. *Tradition, Lotu and Militarism in Fiji* (Lautoka, Fiji Institute of Applied Studies, 2003), 46-47.

⁴ Gorian, H, "Commodore Bainimarama: Military Dictator or True Democrat?" *New Zealand International Review* 33, no. 2 (2008), 9.

October 1874 and London officially took over control of the Royal Army.⁵ Sir Arthur Gordon was the first governor of Fiji over the period of 1875-1880, and the Royal Army was renamed the Armed Native Constabulary (ANC). During 1876-1898, Fiji underwent a further period of instability among dissenting tribes. These insurrections were successfully dealt with by the ANC.⁶ By the beginning of the 20th century; Fiji was considered a secure colony. With internal security now not of paramount importance to the governor, the ANC was disbanded and amalgamated with the Fiji police force, and renamed the Fiji Constabulary. The Fiji police force had been formed following the Deed of Cession and its ranks welcomed former members of the ANC. At this point of Fiji history, the racially integrated (Fiji / European) command structure of the Royal Army and its subsequent organisations assisted in forming a degree of trust and respect between Europeans and Fijians.

The outbreak of the First World War forced the mobilisation of the Fiji Constabulary along with various civilian rifle clubs to defend Fiji. In 1914 the consolidated force (of battalion strength) was named the Fiji Defence Force (FDF). The FDF was initially restricted to European expatriates. However, this restriction was quickly lifted to include indigenous Fijians. A large percentage of European expatriates in the FDF discharged from that organisation and made their way to Great Britain, Australia or New Zealand to serve with the forces of the British Empire in the Middle East and Europe. This reflected the trend of young males seeking active duty abroad.⁷ By 1917, the FDF consisted of one company of four platoons (two European, one indigenous Fijian and one 'mixed race').

⁵ "Republic of Fiji Military Forces," Fiji Government, accessed 12 Dec 2012, www.fiji.gov.fj.

⁶ Halapua, *Tradition, Lotu and Militarism in Fiji*, Lautoka, Fiji Institute of Applied Studies, 2003, 48.

⁷ Ravuvu, *Fijians at War*, Suva, South Pacific Social Sciences Association, 1974, 4.

In January 1915, the government of Fiji despatched a contingent of company size to take part in hostilities on the Western Front. Approximately sixty Fijians of European lineage departed for Great Britain and most were attached to the King's Royal Rifles Regiment, although not as a formed body, being assigned to existing companies. During 1915, these Fijian soldiers in the King's Royal Regiment fought in France and saw significant action during the battle of Ypres. Reinforcement personnel were regularly despatched from Fiji. By the end of hostilities in 1918, approximately 100 Fijians had been killed in action, 100 were commissioned as officers, and 34 were decorated for bravery.⁸

Although Fiji was not directly attacked in the First World War, there were two key incidents involving threats to physical security that occurred. In September 1914, wireless traffic of Admiral Von Spee's German East Asiatic Squadron was intercepted by a British military radio station located at Tamavua in Suva. The Suva station formed part of a network of naval radio stations operating from Hong Kong, Melbourne (under the Royal Australian Navy [RAN]), Awarua and Awanui (in New Zealand). The German squadron's radio traffic was tracked as it made its way across the Pacific prior to the battle of Coronel. This signals intelligence effort, of which Fiji was a part, was even more significant in the Second World War.⁹ Another incident, the precursor of potential trouble in the 1940's, occurred when the German raider '*See Adler*', under Count Felix Von Luchner was wrecked on the island of Wakaya and the crew captured by the Fiji Police. Subsequently, the crew was transferred to New Zealand as prisoners of war. The captured battle colours of the '*See Adler*' are currently displayed in the RFMF Officers Mess at Queen Elizabeth Barracks in Suva, as a war trophy.¹⁰

⁸ Ravuvu, *Fijians At War*, Suva, South Pacific Social Sciences Association, 1974, 6.

⁹ Tonkin-Covell, J, "*The Collectors; Naval, Army and Air Intelligence Organisations during the Second World War*" (PhD Thesis, University of Waikato, 2001), Chapter 2.

¹⁰ Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote), 8 March 2013.

Despite a willingness of the indigenous Fiji males to fight for the crown, as was the custom within European society, it was frowned upon to allow non-Europeans to enter in hostilities against other Europeans. It was particularly relevant to colonial forces and was enforced by the British War Office. During this period Ratu Sukuna, an indigenous Fijian of chiefly status, was studying in Oxford University. Despite applying to enlist in the British Army he was not allowed to do so due to his ethnic origins. Despite Ratu Sukuna's desire to engage in hostilities and his subsequent rejection by the British Army, he remained undeterred in his quest for active service. Subsequently, Ratu Sukuna enlisted in the French Foreign Legion and later engaged in combat operations on the Western Front in France. Ratu Sukuna served with distinction during the war, being decorated for bravery with the *Medaille Militaire*, returning to Fiji a hero.¹¹

Despite the British War Office restriction on non-Europeans engaging in hostilities, they did allow non-European soldiers to conduct garrison support and labouring tasks. A labour company of approximately 100 indigenous Fijians departed Fiji for service in Europe where they served with distinction in Italy and France until 1919. A significant percentage of Fijians of chiefly status served in the Fiji labour corps.

Following the First World War, the Fijian government maintained a small force of FDF volunteer territorial troops who trained annually. It was a benign period in Fiji's history, apart from the requirement of the FDF to mobilise in order to control a domestic strike waged by Indo-Fijian workers in January 1920. This strike and the lack of Indo-Fijian support to the FDF, further degraded race relations in Fiji.¹²

¹¹ Ravuvu, *Fijians At War*, Suva, South Pacific Social Sciences Association, 1974, 6.

¹² *Ibid*, 8.

In December 1941, an Indo-Fijian territorial force transport company of some 70 personnel was established. In 1943, the Fiji government requested that 1,000 males of Indo-Fijian lineage enlist into the FDF labour corps. However, only 331 Indo-Fijians enlisted, and within six months most had been discharged for performance related problems, with only 36 remaining. The incident illustrates the lack of commitment many Indo-Fijians displayed towards military service, which many indigenous Fijians interpreted as disloyalty.

In September 1939, the FDF consisted of a battalion sized territorial force under the command of Colonel J.E. Workman. The unit was named the 1st Battalion, and consisted of a unit headquarters, three rifle companies, a transport company, and a medium machine gun platoon. One rifle company was made up of European Fijians while the other two were made up of indigenous Fijians. The transport company was mainly made up of Indo-Fijians.¹³

On 25 May 1940, a representative of the British Government Mr T. Barker, urged the Fiji Government to mobilize a company size group (100 personnel) for overseas service. Ratu Sakuna and the GCC supported this suggestion, and subsequently a mobilisation was initiated in Fiji.¹⁴

In July 1940 the Government of Great Britain suggested that the Fiji Government should support the purchase of medium bombers for the Royal Air Force of Great Britain, at a price of some \$22,000 (sterling) each. Fund-raising for this project began in Fiji. The Fiji government recognized the requirement to mobilise more of the male population and

¹³ Ravuvu, *Fijians At War*, Suva, South Pacific Social Sciences Association, 1974, 13-14.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 22-23.

recruitment was increased with a rifle company formed within each district in Fiji. By 1942 the FDF had gradually expanded to brigade strength consisting of two regular force infantry battalions. In keeping with Fiji warrior culture, the GCC realised the importance of Fiji to actively participate in combat operations, and requested that the FDF be deployed to fight in North Africa with the British 8th Army. Fiji had entered the Empire at their own request, and many Fijians saw combat operations as a means to prove their worth. At this point in time, with the rising Japanese threat in the Pacific, it was suggested by Britain, that the FDF should be retained for security operations in Fiji.¹⁵

Voluntary recruitment was particularly successful, with military service still being considered an honour for the indigenous Fiji male. In 1942, Fiji was declared a forward operating base for the Allies, and proved to be particularly valuable to the US. In October 1942, the 1st Battalion, Fiji Labour Corps, was formed to support logistics operations in Suva and Lautoka harbour. By the end of 1942, the Fiji Labour Corps consisted of nearly 1300 personnel, including a number that held Ratu status. However, Ratu Sukuna continually lobbied for Fiji involvement in combat operations as he stated that 'Fijians will never be recognised unless our blood is shed first'.¹⁶

By 31 December 1942, the FDF consisted of approximately 7000 personnel, a remarkable achievement given that no conscription was required. The organisation of the FDF had now grown to brigade size. This brigade consisted of a force headquarters, three regular infantry battalions, a territorial force infantry battalion, three batteries of artillery (two medium, one heavy/coastal), two company size commando units, and a series of logistic,

¹⁵ Ravuvu, *Fijians at War*, Suva, South Pacific Social Sciences Association, 1974, 13.

¹⁶ Ibid.

engineer and home guard battalions. This brigade was named the Fiji Infantry Brigade Group.¹⁷

During the peak of Fijian mobilisation in August 1943, the FDF consisted of the following ethnic make-up; indigenous Fijian, 6371; Indo-Fijian, 264; European-Fijian, 803; 2ND NZEF, 808.¹⁸ At the outbreak of hostilities in September 1939 a significant number of the Fiji European community made their own way to Australia, New Zealand, or Great Britain to join the military forces of those nations.

From the outset the FDF Brigade was mobilised with significant input from New Zealand, with many of the officers, non-commissioned officers (NCO) and specialists being New Zealand military personnel. These personnel were seconded to the FDF from the 2nd NZEF, while formed elements of the 2nd NZEF arrived later. The FDF peaked in August 1942 at almost 9000 personnel. In May of 1940 an Officer of the 2nd NZEF, Major Taylor and a small team of Warrant Officers began intensive training of the FDF territorial personnel.¹⁹ In November 1940 the 2nd NZEF provided a headquarters element within Fiji and took over training of the FDF. Heavy coastal artillery arrived for defence of Suva harbour, mainly from New Zealand. These guns were mostly 4.7 inch calibre however, some three-pounder guns were also sourced. Following the outbreak of hostilities with Japan following the attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, more personnel from 2nd NZEF arrived, plus additional weaponry such as 30 calibre rifles, Thompson sub-machine guns as well as light and medium two-inch mortars.²⁰ At this stage of the war, much of this

¹⁷ Howlett, *The History Of The Fiji Military Forces; 1939-1945*, London, Government of Fiji, 1948, 39.

¹⁸ Ibid, 159.

¹⁹ Ibid, 16.

²⁰ Ravuvu, *Fijians at War*, Suva, South Pacific Social Sciences Association, 1974, 13.

weaponry was supplied by the US.²¹ By early 1942 the NZEF forces in Fiji were of division size, consisting of both the 8th and 14th Infantry Brigades. The NZEF force was named 3rd Division, and initially were commanded by Major-General Cunningham however, he had to return to New Zealand on medical grounds and was subsequently replaced by Major-General O.H. Mead, on 9 March 1942.²²

In May 1942 the US 37th Division arrived in Fiji. This Division took command of the FDF on 30 June 1942, and shortly afterwards the majority of the 3rd Division, 2nd NZDF departed. It was under this command that Fijians would see action during the Solomon Islands campaign. In September 1942 the FDF was renamed Fiji Military Force (FMF).²³ Until mid 1942 military preparations within Fiji were of a defensive nature. Following the US action against Japan during the Battle of the Coral Sea 4-8 May 1942, and their victory over Japan during the Battle of Midway 4-7 June 1942, the forces within Fiji prepared for a more offensive posture. This was further encouraged by the arrival of US reinforcements in Fiji later in 1942.

The indigenous Fijian male population excelled at soldiering, particularly in regards to the application of battle-craft. Many Fijians could accurately hurl grenades up to 45 metres while many others received individual marksmanship qualifications on the Lee Enfield .303 and United States .30 calibre rifles.²⁴ Many Fijians were considered to be highly effective in the discipline of bayonet fighting, and their skill regarding stealth and concealment in close-country drew the attention of their non-Fijian counterparts. It was

²¹ Gillespie, O.A, *The Pacific; New Zealand In The Second World War 1939-1945* (Wellington, Department of Internal Affairs, 1952), 50.

²² Howlett, *The History Of The Fiji Military Forces; 1939-1945*, London, Government of Fiji, 1948, 29-30.

²³ Ravuvu, *Fijians At War*, Suva, South Pacific Social Sciences Association, 1974, 20.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 23.

the recognition of these close-country skills that resulted in the establishment of unconventional units, such as the Fiji Guerrilla Commandos.

In early 1941, the threat posed by Japan against Fiji was widely recognised, but it was the attack by Japan on Pearl Harbor that gave stimulus to defensive preparations in Fiji. Preparations were based on a likely amphibious attack by Japan. In the advent of such an event, it was assessed that an invasion of Fiji by Japan could not be repelled, and that combat operations within Fiji would transition from conventional operations to 'guerrilla-type' operations. Based on this theory, the Fiji Commandos were formed.²⁵

The Fiji Commandos were formed early in 1942, as territorial force units raised on a regional basis. These units were Northern Independent Commando, Southern Independent Commando, and Eastern Independent Commando. The officers in charge of each Commando were seconded from 2nd NZEF. Tasks of each Commando included reconnaissance and coast-watching. In the advent of hostilities in Fiji, the Commandos would undertake irregular guerrilla operations against the invading Japanese. The US forces were so impressed with the Fiji Commandos that they began to rotate personnel for six week periods, through the commandos to enhance their close-country skills.

The Fiji Commandos drew great attention from the media but there was still some reluctance on the part of the US to allow these 'coloured' soldiers to fight. This factor was a result of racial segregation practiced by the US military during the 1940's. As a result of pressure applied by Fijian and New Zealand commanders of FMF units, and some Ratu, the US allowed the deployment of a small Fiji Commando force. In December 1942 a

²⁵ Howlett, *The History Of The Fiji Military Forces; 1939-1945*, London, Government of Fiji, 1948, 225.

Commando platoon, that included seven New Zealand personnel, commanded by Captain Williams (NZEF), was selected from the Southern and Eastern Commando units. This force was named the Special Party, and following a period of intensive training, deployed to Guadalcanal where they provided reconnaissance for the US Forces. The success of the Special Party paved the way for further deployments of FMF²⁶.

Due to the success of the Fiji Commando concept, the Independent Commandos were gradually reformed between late 1942 and mid 1943 into the 1st and 2nd Commando's. This allowed a change in focus from defensive style territorial force to regular expeditionary Commandos. The 1st Commando was formed in January 1943 and was commanded by Captain C. Trip (NZEF). This company sized organisation departed Fiji for the Solomon Islands on 15 April, and arriving in theatre on 19 April 1943. This deployment was conducted in conjunction with the deployment of 1st Battalion, Fiji Infantry Regiment. 1st Commando supported the US 43rd Division during operations in New Georgia for a period of six weeks, where they sustained numerous casualties.²⁷ Following the New Georgia operation, 1st Commando then supported 14 Brigade, 3rd Division NZEF, on the island of Vella Lavella with this operation lasting approximately one month, following which the unit saw action on Kolombangarra Island.²⁸ 1st Commando remained on active duty until 15 November 1943, when they were replaced by 2nd Commando. 1st Commando was later disbanded in May 1944.

The 2nd Commando was mobilised on 1 June 1943, mainly utilising personnel from the Southern and Northern Commandos (including 37 NZEF personnel), and was commanded by Major Ellis. The 2nd Commando departed for the Solomon Islands in November 1943,

²⁶ Ravuvu, *Fijians At War*, Suva, South Pacific Social Sciences Association, 1974, 23.

²⁷ Howlett, *The History Of The Fiji Military Forces; 1939-1945*, London, Government of Fiji, 1948, 221.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 271-272.

replacing 1st Commando. It then deployed to Bougainville Island until 31 May 1944.²⁹ 2nd Commando was disbanded in late 1944.

As with the 1st Commando, the 1st Battalion, Fiji Infantry Regiment (FIR) deployed to Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands on 14 April 1943. This unit was commanded by Lt Col Taylor (NZDF).³⁰ On 11 October 1943, 1st Battalion FIR landed on Bougainville. The Commanding Officer was then wounded, and was replaced by Colonel Upton. In January 1944 the Battalion became involved in particularly fierce fighting however, was able to withdraw largely unscathed. From December 1943 until June 1944 the soldiers of 1 FIR saw continuous combat operations. In July 1944, 1 FIR returned to Fiji.

3 FIR, was commanded by a British officer named Colonel Voelcker, and landed in Bougainville on 23 March 1944 at the height of the battle over the Allied Torokina beach-head.³¹ On 21 June, 3 FIR conducted an amphibious operation in the vicinity of the Jaba River on Bougainville, and were decisively engaged by defending Japanese forces. 3 FIR managed to withdraw. It was during this battle that Corporal Sikanaivalu won the posthumous Victoria Cross.³² With land combat operations on Bougainville beginning to wind-down, 3 FIR returned to Fiji on 6 September 1944.

1 and 3 FIR suffered 37 casualties (21 killed in action, 4 dead of wounds, 6 accidentally killed, 1 missing, and 5 died of illness). 1st Commando lost 4 killed in action with 1 dying of illness. A total of 42 Fijians died during the Solomon Islands' campaign. Fiji was

²⁹ Gillespie, *The Pacific; New Zealand In The Second World War 1939-1945*, Wellington, Department of Internal Affairs, 1952, 280-284.

³⁰ Howlett, *The History Of The Fiji Military Forces; 1939-1945*, London, Government of Fiji, 1948, 50.

³¹ Gillespie, *The Pacific; New Zealand In The Second World War 1939-1945*, Wellington, Department of Internal Affairs, 1952, 281.

³² Ravuvu, *Fijians At War*, Suva, South Pacific Social Sciences Association, 1974, 54.

awarded with some 29 decorations and 25 personnel were mentioned in dispatches. Decorations awarded included 1 VC³³, 1 MBE³⁴, 2 MC³⁵, 4 DCM³⁶, 16 MM³⁷ and 2 U S Silver Stars. During the Solomon Islands campaign, the indigenous Fijian soldiers had proven to be tactically proficient, brave, and had demonstrated their worth to other allied nations. A certain level of affinity had been formed between the indigenous Fijian soldiers and New Zealand soldiers during this period. Given the noble status of the military within Fiji society, the lack of Indo-Fijians involved in active duty during this period did cause race relations in Fiji did deteriorate significantly.

After the war, the FMF was largely demobilized. The FMF retained a small light-infantry based, regular force army supplemented by a sizable territorial force. This force has been involved over subsequent decades in numerous low-level stability and support operations as well as peace support operations.

In 1949 it was decided by the New Zealand government that the FMF would be officially supported by New Zealand. In 1951, a Fiji Infantry Battalion was deployed on operations in Malaya to take action against the communist guerrillas during the Malayan Emergency. The Fiji Battalion, made up of some Second World War veterans, proved to be highly successful in the counter-insurgency action against the Chinese communist forces. It has been stated that out of all of the Commonwealth battalions serving in the Malayan

³³ Victoria Cross.

³⁴ Order of The British Empire.

³⁵ Military Cross.

³⁶ Distinguished Conduct Medal.

³⁷ Military Medal.

Emergency, the Fiji Battalion was credited with having killed the most communist insurgents. The soldiers of Fiji had again lived up to their warrior tradition.³⁸

Aside from internal stability operations within Fiji, the FMF (later named the Royal Fiji Military Forces, then [after 1987] the Republic of Fiji Military Forces) have not engaged in high intensity combat operations since World War II. However, the RFMF have deployed an infantry battalion (1 FIR) to the Middle-East (Lebanon), and have maintained an infantry battalion (2 FIR) in Sinai since the 1980's, as part of the United Nations missions within that region.³⁹ The 2 FIR troops in Sinai have served for a very long time alongside a small NZDF contingent, and at present the commander in Sinai is a New Zealand officer, Major-General Whiting. The Sinai force has had one Fijian Commander, Major-General Konroti.⁴⁰ 1 FIR has also been involved in providing close protection to the United Nations operation in Baghdad, Iraq. Fiji's involvement with the UN is mainly seen as an income stream for the government that unfortunately, is not re-invested into the RFMF. During the peace support operation in East Timor beginning in 1999, the RFMF also deployed an infantry company in support of International Force for East Timor (INTERFET), and the later United Nations operation. During the East Timor deployment, the RFMF company came under command of the New Zealand infantry battalion also stationed there.⁴¹ The RFMF also deployed an infantry company to the Solomon Islands as part of the Regional Assistance Mission Solomon Islands (RAMSI) in 2003.

³⁸ Gorian, "Commodore Bainimarama: Military Dictator or true Democrat?" *New Zealand International Review*, vol.33, no.2, (March-April 2008), 10.

³⁹ Tonkin-Covell, J, "The Very Long Way Back: The Republic of Fiji Military Forces and the Neutrality Convention," *New Zealand Journal of Defence Studies* 1 (2007), 14.

⁴⁰ Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote), 5 December 2012.

⁴¹ Neal, D.J. (from personal experience), 12 December 2012.

The RFMF is currently commanded by Commodore Bainimarama, although he is primarily involved in his duties as Prime Minister of the Fiji Interim Government. At the time of writing, Colonel Mosese Tikoitoga is in effect, the operational commander of the RFMF.⁴² The Strategic Command Headquarters of the RFMF is located in Suva, and is responsible for the development of strategic plans for the RFMF. However, the heart of the RFMF is Land Force Command, which is also located in Suva. Land Force Command is responsible for the operational control and organisation of the RFMF and consists of the following organisational elements:

HQ Land Force Command

- a. Naval Unit.
 - (1) 2 x Vai class, 39 ton, coastal patrol boats.
 - (2) 2 x Levuka class, 97 ton, coastal patrol boats.
 - (3) 3 x Pacific Forum class, 162 ton, large patrol boats (each capable of transporting an infantry company group).

- b. 1st Land Force Group
 - (1) 3 FIR (Suva). Regular force infantry battalion. 3 FIR includes 'Z Coy'; a Special Forces sub-unit, under command.
 - (2) 6 FIR (Suva). Territorial force infantry battalion, with one regular force company.
 - (3) 9 FIR (Suva). Territorial force infantry battalion, with one regular force company.

- c. 2nd Land Force Group⁴³
 - (1) 4 FIR (Nadi). Territorial force infantry battalion, with one regular force company.

⁴² Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote), 5 December 2012.

⁴³ Tonkin-Covell, largely cadre units required for mobilisation in case of emergency (direct quote), 5 December 2012.

- (2) 5 FIR (Lautoka). Territorial force infantry battalion, with one regular force company.
- (3) 8 FIR (Labasa). Territorial force infantry battalion, with one regular force company.

d. Overseas Deployed Land Forces

- (1) 1 FIR (Baghdad, Iraq). At the time of writing the strength of 1 FIR was approximately 300 personnel.
- (2) 2 FIR (Sinai, Egypt). At the time of writing the strength of 2 FIR was 350 personnel (note that some of these personnel are territorial forces voluntarily mobilized for active duty).

All infantry battalions contain integral logistics, signals and engineer assets. The RFMF also maintains a modest complement of light mortars (81 mm), and 4 x 25-pounder artillery pieces, the latter mainly retained for ceremonial purposes. Infantry forces are armed with individual weapons (mainly the US 5.56 calibre, Colt M-16 A2) with a number of 40mm grenade launchers, light machine guns, general purpose machine guns, and sub-machine guns.⁴⁴ The RFMF has approximately 3,500 regular troops and 10,000 territorial troops. It is debateable how many of these territorial force troops are able to be quickly mobilised and equipped. The current trained state of the territorial force is also debateable. There are almost 2,500 Fiji soldiers currently serving in the British Army and numerous former RFMF soldiers working with private security companies. The RFMF have no aircraft.

During the 1990's, the RFMF developed a Special Forces element designated as the 'Counter-Revolutionary Warfare Unit' (CRWU). The CRWU became directly involved in

⁴⁴ Tonkin-Covell, "The Very Long Way Back: The Republic of Fiji Military Forces and the Neutrality Convention" *New Zealand Journal of Defence Studies* 1 (2007), 14.

the coup and subsequent mutiny during the period 2000. This internal security problem was suppressed by the regular infantry forces, namely 3 FIR, led by Lieutenant Colonel Bill Seruvakula and Colonel Jone Baledrokadroka.⁴⁵ Prior to the period of internal unrest in 2000, the CRWU did not come under command of the RFMF Land Forces, and it has been claimed by Tonkin-Covell, that this Special Forces unit became ‘someone else’s private army’.⁴⁶ As a consequence of the rogue activity of the CRWU during 2000, the RFMF have been careful to retain command and control of their Special Forces unit, ‘Zulu Company’. Therefore, despite Special Forces being a strategic asset, ‘Zulu Company’ is retained under direct command of 3 FIR. The actual role of ‘Zulu Company’ is unclear. There is little evidence that they are comprehensively trained for the traditional Special Forces role of strategic reconnaissance, which in turn leads to the assumption that ‘Zulu Company’ may still be focussed on domestic internal security duties.

For a relatively small country, Fiji holds a sizable defence force, being the third largest in the region behind Australia and New Zealand. The French contingent within New Caledonia only consists of a small but effective expeditionary element. Service within the RFMF is still a highly sought after occupation in Fiji, with the RFMF still having no problem recruiting young males (of late, for every vacancy within the RFMF, there has been almost five applicants).⁴⁷ The majority of RFMF personnel are indigenous Fijians. Currently there are only approximately 30 serving RFMF Indo-Fijian personnel. One notable exception to this trend is demonstrated by the Chief of Staff, RFMF, Brigadier-General Mohammed Azziz, a specialist legal service officer.⁴⁸ During an officer

⁴⁵ Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote), 5 December 2012.

⁴⁶ Tonkin-Covell, “The Very Long Way Back: The Republic of Fiji Military Forces and the Neutrality Convention” *New Zealand Journal of Defence Studies* 1 (2007), 12.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 13.

⁴⁸ Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote), 5 December 2012.

commissioning course in 2005 conducted by the RFMF, not a single Indo-Fijian officer was commissioned.⁴⁹

Of note regarding the RFMF, is the sizable light infantry force that exists, and can be mobilised during periods of internal tensions or external threat. The RFMF is highly skilled at internal security operations. The RFMF also generally maintains a disciplined and well controlled force. However, despite involvement in peace support operations, the RFMF has suffered of late due to budget cuts and a lack of comprehensive training. While the RFMF is effective in internal security and peace support operations, this force may be found wanting if exposed to high intensity combat operations without comprehensive training, logistics and capability development.

Traditionally, many RFMF officers were trained by the military forces of Britain, Australia and New Zealand. Rabuka received his initial training with the NZDF at the New Zealand Army Officer Cadet School in Waiouru (Rabuka also received training at the Indian Military Staff College)⁵⁰. Bainimarama was similarly trained by the Australian Defence Force (ADF) in Canberra, Australia and later went on to complete the Malaysian Military Staff College. The severance of links between the RFMF and traditional supporters of the NZDF and ADF, has forced the RFMF to look elsewhere for external support. Now a number of senior officers within the RFMF attend training courses in China, India and Malaysia (the latter two nations hosting greater RFMF numbers). Members of 'Zulu Company' have also conducted Special Forces training with the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) in China.⁵¹ As a consequence of this factor, affiliations and connections between

⁴⁹ Neal, D.J. (from personal experience), 12 December 2012.

⁵⁰ Sharpham, *Rabuka of Fiji; The authorised biography of Major-General Sitiveni Rabuka*, (Brisbane, Central Queensland University Press, 2000), 42-43.

⁵¹ Neal, D.J. (from personal experience), 12 December 2012.

the RFMF and the military forces of New Zealand and Australia have withered. Taking into account the RFMF is one of the largest military forces in the South Pacific, second only to Australia and New Zealand, this presents a challenge to the latter nations. The personnel of the RFMF are rapidly becoming estranged from their peers within the NZDF and ADF and closer to their Asian supporters, such as India, Malaysia and China. Should this rift between the RFMF / NZDF / ADF not be mended soon, the ability to regain a normal relationship in the future will become problematic. There is no doubt that many senior Fijian officers would like the New Zealand linkage back for training purposes.⁵²

In conclusion, this chapter has examined Fiji military history, charted the importance of the RFMF within Fiji society, and described the support that most indigenous Fijians hold towards the military. Within indigenous Fijian society, the military holds a paramount status within both political and social circles. Due to the maintenance of a battalion in the Lebanon for a long time, plus the Sinai battalion, the number of indigenous Fijians with connections in terms of former military service is high, with a much larger portion of the indigenous Fijian population having served in the military than in other countries. Given a demographic group of approximately 500,000 people, this factor is somewhat disproportionate. This is partly due to the traditional warrior culture within Fiji, and the fact that the warrior normally also holds chiefly status. The reluctance of the Indo-Fijian community to support both the RFMF and the general Fiji war effort during the Second World War is also partly responsible for the poor state of race relations existing between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians. Lastly, the NZDF and RFMF have developed close professional and personal ties since the World War II period. Once the future government of Fiji and New Zealand renew political links, the NZDF and RFMF relationship will

⁵² Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote from interview, Dr Tonkin-Covell / Colonel M. Tikoitoga, Fiji, 16 October 2012), 5 December 2012.

quickly follow on, and may become a pivotal factor regarding the future relationship between the two nations.

CHAPTER 4

WARRIOR CULTURE, RELIGION AND MILITARISM WITHIN FIJI

On 11 May 1987 elements of the RFMF, led by Lieutenant Colonel Rabuka, staged a coup against the democratically elected government of Fiji. This set a dangerous precedent. The ‘line in the sand’, that separates soldiers from politicians had been crossed. From this point it became difficult for the RFMF to return to a level of political neutrality normally observed by military forces within democratic nations. Following the 1987 coup, the RFMF increasingly acted as a power-broker in Fiji politics. This became evident over the next two decades with examples of further military actions occurring against the government of Fiji in 2000 and 2006. The RFMF have always held a prestigious position within Fiji society, however from 1987 onwards the influence of the military within Fiji became overtly political. The RFMF morphed from being an instrument of national power to a dominant political actor in Fiji. This factor is in breach of the established convention that decrees the non-involvement of the military in politics.¹ However, in this case it can be argued that the actions of the RFMF have been partly influenced from a cultural base. This chapter will consider how the Fiji warrior and religious culture has manifested itself within all aspects of contemporary Fiji society, including the political dimension.

Church leader and author Winston Halapua, examined the subject of militarism in Fiji. He argued that militarism in Fiji is identified by the political interests of part of the indigenous Fijian middle and upper class, and the Fiji ‘chief system’ (including the political body - GCC). It requires to be stated, that the GCC was a creation of the British Colonial administration, rather than being an initiative of the Fiji Chiefs.² Each coup in Fiji has

¹ Tonkin-Covell, “The Very Long Way Back: The Republic of Fiji Military Forces and the Neutrality Convention” *New Zealand Journal of Defence Studies* 1 (2007), 12.

² Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote), 12 December 2012.

had a political dimension, involved internal security considerations, and has been both unique and complex. During the period of his research, Halapua was mainly referring to the actions of the RFMF in 1987. However, he also argued that many elements of Fiji society (including the GCC, Methodist Church, and upper / middle social class) collaborated with the RFMF in order to achieve political objectives. In his research, Halapua used the following definition of militarization:

Militarization should be understood as the process whereby military values, ideology and patterns of behaviour achieve a dominating influence on the political, social, economic and external affairs of the state and as a consequence the structural, ideological and behavioural patterns of both the society and the government are militarized. Militarism should be seen as one of the more perturbing results of this process. It must be noted that militarism is multi-dimensional and varied with different manifestation in various circumstances dependent on historical background, national traditions, class structures, social conditions, economic strength etc.³

Prior to contact with Europeans, Fiji societal infrastructure was based on a series of tribes. The village unit was pivotal to Fijian community, culture and social cohesion. Each village consisted of people with a common ancestry or *Kalou-vu*. The traditional Fiji social framework is understood in terms of inter-relation between every possible aspect of physical and spiritual life. The *Turaga* (chief) was only relevant if he was located within the tribal *Vanua* (territory).⁴ *Vanua* consists of a widely believed inter-relation between land, minerals, ancestors, mountains, water, wild animals, forests, people and beliefs. People within their own family groups and tribes were largely self-sufficient and independent. This helped create a feudal and self-sufficient social structure that was able to bind much of Fiji society, albeit initially in a series of independent social structures.

³ Halapua, *Tradition, Lotu and Militarism in Fiji*, Lautoka, Fiji Institute of Applied Studies, 2003, 1.

⁴ *Ibid*, 81.

Fiji society has always been heavily influenced by spiritual beliefs. Activities and rites associated with the spiritual relationship between people and gods is described using the Polynesian term *Lotu*.⁵ In the English language, *Lotu* translates as church or religion. Given the importance of *Lotu* in Fiji, the *Bete* (priest) maintained a dominant role in society, particularly during periods of warfare. Sacrifices were required in order to have the gods on the chief's side. *Bete*, *Turaga*, and war were believed to be linked to success or failure of survivalist activities such as fishing and farming. Spiritualism, religion and warfare also gained the perception of being directly linked to chiefly power with a belief that warfare and the loss of human life was required to appease the gods. It was of utmost importance to the *Turaga* that the Gods (via the *Bete*) were on his side and this could only be achieved by human blood being spilt. The importance of spiritualism as part of Fiji culture can still be seen today, and is demonstrated by Methodist ministers being permanently stationed in leading chiefly villages.

The warrior was also seen as being a key component in Fiji society.⁶ *Bati* (translates as 'tooth' or 'sharp edge') described an elite group of warriors.⁷ In times of war, the *Bati* served their *Turaga* by defending the *Vanua*. War had the advantage of enhancing regional tribal unity, particularly if villages joined together in solidarity. The *Bolebole* ceremony was performed by allies in recognition of their loyalty in support of a coming conflict. The *Bolebole* ceremony consisted of feasting, boasting and displays of masculinity.⁸ Therefore, external security threats assisted the *Vunuivalu* (war chief) through the creation of strong internal social structures that maintained tribal unity, identity, and morale.

⁵ Halapua, *Tradition, Lotu and Militarism in Fiji*, Lautoka, Fiji Institute of Applied Studies, 2003, 70.

⁶ Gorian, "Commodore Bainimarama: Military Dictator or True Democrat?" *New Zealand International Review* 33, no. 2 (2008), 8.

⁷ Halapua, *Tradition, Lotu and Militarism in Fiji*, Lautoka, Fiji Institute of Applied Studies, 2003, 209.

⁸ *Ibid*, 25.

War was seen as a rite of passage for young men, and inextricably linked to survival and society in general. Rivalries and competition between *Turaga* were common. Boundaries were not always firmly established, and tribes periodically fought to protect existing territories or to make geographic or political gains. War victories increased the prestige and power of the tribe. The *Vunivalu*, normally became a leader of his own people and also reigned over all of those that he conquered.

Warfare was also associated with the preparation of youths for manhood. Pre-adult Fiji males were indoctrinated in warfare from an early age. In some extreme examples, captured prisoners were bound to trees and killed by the *Vunivalu*'s children as a method of combat inoculation.⁹

Martial skill, gave men noble status and high social standing within their tribe. Warriors were admired for their display of physical strength and courage.¹⁰ Further enhancing the prestige of the warrior was the fact that a man successful in battle was viewed by women as likely to be successful in a sexual context. A successful warrior would get first choice of the village eligible females at cessation of hostilities. Warriors helped to maintain unity within the tribe and their victories were celebrated with women singing and partaking in erotic dancing. Men were expected to fight in order to support their chief's policy, either as part-time fighters or within a group of dedicated fighters (*Bati*). Fighting was the traditional employment of males prior to the 20th century and is still considered to hold a noble status. Given that this culture was still being practiced in many parts of Fiji up until the late 19th century, the pivotal symbolic status of the soldier in contemporary Fiji society can be partly explained.

⁹ Halapua, *Tradition, Lotu and Militarism in Fiji*, Lautoka, Fiji Institute of Applied Studies, 2003, 25.

¹⁰ Ravuvu, *Fijians At War*, Suva, South Pacific Social Sciences Association, 1974, 2.

Within Fiji, one of the most influential leaders of the 20th century came from the warrior caste. Ratu Sakuna is still deeply admired and respected in Fiji society, primarily for his leadership and prowess in military matters. This reputation was gained while serving with distinction during the First World War.

Despite the fact that fighting between tribes in pre-colonial times was common, most combat was limited, and consisted of small skirmishes and ambushes. Confrontations were often short, and the number of casualties low. A symbolic victory was often all that was required to achieve physical or political objectives. Conflict was not waged as a war of extermination, as in most cases it consisted of low-level conflict with limited objectives, such as the enhancement of territory. The extermination of all opponents was not viewed as being practical, for the opponent may become a future ally. *Turaga* who were able to raise a sizeable force could dominate within their *Vanua*.

As contact with European traders during the 19th century increased, so did the availability of muskets and cannons. Modern weapons allowed some tribal groups to dominate more geographic areas than was previously possible. This resulted from the enhanced weapon-based lethality available to tribes who had access to muskets. The increased rates of attrition during inter-tribal conflict, is analogous to the Musket Wars conducted by Maori tribes in New Zealand during the early 19th century. For example, the Bau Rewa war of 1843 resulted in some 400 casualties. As a result of this conflict Cakobau, the chief of the Bau Island group became one of the most influential chiefs in Fiji and was considered, by European settlers, as being the chief ruler of Fiji during that period.¹¹

¹¹ Gorian, "Commodore Bainimarama: Military Dictator or True Democrat?" *New Zealand International Review* 33, no. 2 (2008), 9.

With increased arsenals being maintained by various *Turaga*, successive geographic areas were attached to the respective *Vanua* via combat victory. Each tribal area had its own *Turaga Levu* who was directly subject to the King. *Turaga Levu* ruled via family heads called *Matagali*. A group of families located together loosely constituted a tribe with several tribes together creating a district. This system eventually developed to constitute what is now known in Fiji as the GCC.¹²

Due to tribal based society in Fiji, competition and rivalry between tribal groups is understandable, but is not a factor well understood outside of Fiji. While rivalry between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians, is well known outside of Fiji, the complex dimensions of inter-tribal rivalry less known. Traditionally in Fiji, tribal groups from the Eastern regions have dominated the political scene, particularly within the Lau archipelago and the island of Bau. The Lau island group is politically dominated by the Mara family while the Bau island group is dominated by the Cakobau family. Both of these clans are of Polynesian lineage while many people from the Western regions of Fiji are of Melanesian extraction. Both the Mara and Cakobau clans have continued to hold political sway within Fiji politics, and are natural rivals. Aspects of such tribal rivalry have been seen as recently as May 2011, with RFMF Colonel Tevita Mara¹³ actively resisting RFMF Commander Bainimarama (who is loosely aligned with the Cakobau clan and is considered to be of junior chiefly status). The civil coup of 2000 saw Speight (of Cakobau lineage)

¹² Halapua, *Tradition, Lotu and Militarism in Fiji*, Lautoka, Fiji Institute of Applied Studies, 2003, 9.

¹³ Tevita Mara is the youngest son of the most influential Prime Minister to come out of modern Fiji, the late Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara. Colonel Tevita Mara was also the former commander of 3 FIR, the 'Home Battalion'. He is also brother in law to the current Fiji President, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, and to Ratu Epeli Ganilau. Both Nailatikau and Ganilau have commanded the RFMF, the former in the 1980's, the latter in the 1990's, (direct quote, Tonkin-Covell), 5 December 2012.

removing a government that included representation of the Mara clan, from power. Such tribal influences in Fiji politics continue to be relevant today.¹⁴

In 1874 Fiji came under British administration, a factor that helped unify Fiji and ended many armed conflicts due to a reduction in inter-tribal warfare.¹⁵ During the 19th century, the influence of the Christian church increased. Fijian culture already held particularly strong spiritual beliefs and many Fijians' became enthusiastic converts to Christianity, as was practiced at the time by Wesleyan missionaries who were particularly active in the South Pacific, especially in Tonga. Trading and tribal connections between Tonga and Fiji helped to quickly establish Wesleyan Christian links to Fiji.¹⁶

Christian missionaries sought to erase barbaric practices such as cannibalism, and began to convert as many Fijians as possible to their religion. This conversion to Christianity included many high-profile chiefs such as Ratu Cakobau who became a Christian of the Methodist Church in 1854.¹⁷ Methodism quickly established itself as the dominant form of Christianity in Fiji with Methodist churches quickly being established in principal chiefly villages. Within contemporary Fiji some 80% of indigenous Fijians belong to the Methodist Church whereas much of the Indo-Fiji community subscribe to the Hindu faith.¹⁸ Rituals belonging to the Methodist church are a well established part of Fiji military culture. Prayers are normally conducted on a daily basis within the RFMF.

¹⁴ Field, M, Dominion Post newspaper article, 17 May 2011.

¹⁵ Gorian, "Commodore Bainimarama: Military Dictator or True Democrat?" *New Zealand International Review* 33, no. 2 (2008), 9.

¹⁶ Halapua, *Tradition, Lotu and Militarism in Fiji*, Lautoka, Fiji Institute of Applied Studies, 2003, 69.

¹⁷ Ibid, 72.

¹⁸ Prasad, *Tears in Paradise*, Auckland, Glade Publishers, 2004, 45.

In western society it is commonly accepted that religion and politics should not mix, although this tenet is not as strictly adhered to as the complete separation of the military from politics. As such, most western democratic governments are strictly secular. While some religious leaders may occasionally offer an opinion regarding political matters, such situations are exceptional rather than regular.

Due to the fact that most indigenous Fijians belong to the Methodist Church, it is understandable that many Methodist Church leaders may hold nationalist political views. In this thesis, the term nationalist refers to those indigenous Fijians who believe that they are the rightful rulers of Fiji, and prefer the political exclusion of Indo-Fijians. There is evidence to suggest that some nationalist political views held by the Methodist Church have been campaigned by Methodist Ministers (note that Rabuka is a senior lay figure in the Methodist Church),¹⁹ with the church pulpit used to communicate these political views. Michael Field claims that during the coups of 1987 and 2000, the Methodist Church actively supported elements of the military and civil population in the overthrow of democratic governments. Here the link can be seen between *Lotu* and *Vanua* that is manifested in contemporary Fiji politics via the links between the Methodist Church, RFMF and indigenous Fiji society.²⁰

The warrior culture is a deeply embedded ethos within Fiji society. In contemporary Fiji, military service is still seen as a particularly rewarding and prestigious form of employment among the indigenous Fiji community. This factor has been evident throughout the history of the RFMF, and is still seen today with large numbers of young Fijian males viewing employment in the RFMF as being one of the better options

¹⁹ Sharpham, J, *Rabuka of Fiji*, (Rockhampton, Central Queensland University Press, 2000), 209.

²⁰ Field; Baba; Nabobo-Baba, *Speight of Violence; Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup*, Auckland, Reed Publishing Ltd, 2005, 152.

available. The RFMF, particularly the officer corps has never struggled to attract eager recruits from the male population. Commonly, an RFMF recruiting drive for 200 soldiers attracts over 1,000 applicants.²¹

Within contemporary Fiji the inextricable link, one that may be described as *Vanua*, exists within the upper and middle class of indigenous Fiji society and the RFMF. Here Helen Gorian has stated that:

Fijians, heirs to a powerful war tradition sought militarisms maintenance, adapted it and used it to strengthen political power.....In Fiji the political role of the serviceman is longstanding and important.²²

Halapua, and other academics such as Michael Field,²³ have claimed that militarism has been manifested within contemporary Fiji during the two military actions of 1987. Halapua argued that the RFMF acted in the interests of a prominent section of the indigenous Fijian upper and middle classes and their supporters in the GCC.²⁴ However, that prominent section of Fiji society may also have held various divided opinions. Fiji has always been characterised by a certain amount of militarism, and indigenous Fijian society is still partly dominated by this strong warrior culture. In contemporary Fiji, it is seen as normal that soldiers dominate Fiji political structure.²⁵

The concept of *Lotu* and its link to *Vanua* is also claimed by Halapua to be a deciding factor regarding the argument of militarism in Fiji. The RFMF is dominated by indigenous Fijians, most of whom are practicing members of the Methodist church with Methodist

²¹ Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote from interview with senior RFMF officer), 5 December 2012.

²² Gorian, "Commodore Bainimarama: Military Dictator or True Democrat?" *New Zealand International Review* 33, no. 2 (2008), 38.

²³ Field, Baba, Nabobo-Baba, *Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup*, Auckland, Reed Publishing Ltd, 2005, 37.

²⁴ Halapua, *Tradition, Lotu and Militarism in Fiji*, Lautoka, Fiji Institute of Applied Studies, 2003, 1.

²⁵ Gorian, "Commodore Bainimarama: Military Dictator or True Democrat?" *New Zealand International Review* 33, no. 2 (2008), 11.

symbolism and practices being an accepted part of RFMF culture. As with collaboration between the RFMF and politics, Halapua has also stated that in some situations the Methodist church has pursued political agenda's with the assistance of the RFMF. In 1987 Halapua claims Fijian Methodist ministers assisted in organising the protests which provoked the overthrow of the Indo-Fijian dominated Fiji Government via the application of racist sentiments during church sermons.²⁶

Each period of unrest within Fiji must be analysed within the bounds of its own context. However, it can be argued that both the Methodist Church, and particularly the RFMF, have at various times during the past three decades 'crossed the line', in becoming involved (or in the case of the RFMF, dominant actors) within domestic Fiji politics. While this paradigm may be deemed by some as being acceptable when considered within the Fiji concept of *Vanua*, this practice is strongly incompatible with democratic principles. Such political involvement by the Methodist Church and the RFMF may take significant time and effort (perhaps decades) to eradicate. However, to illustrate one factor that provides some hope for the future, it is noted that the leadership of the RFMF and the Methodist Church have been at times on opposite sides, as seen in the events of 2000, and in their role of the present Fiji Interim Government. It is also clearly seen in some contemporary submissions to the constitutional commission presently drafting Fiji's new constitution, the advocacy of a Christian state by the Church and the nationalists, and the blunt rejection of this by the senior people of the Fiji Interim Government (including the President), and the RFMF.²⁷

²⁶ Halapua, *Tradition, Lotu and Militarism in Fiji*, Lautoka, Fiji Institute of Applied Studies, 2003, 2.

²⁷ Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote, from interview with Fiji President, Suva, October 2012), 5 December 2012.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS OF THE SERIES OF COUPS: 1987 - 2006

The following chapter will analyse the causes and effects relating to the series of coups and mutiny that have occurred within Fiji, beginning in 1987. Specifically the chapter will examine the 1987 coup, the formation of Rabuka's constitution, the coup and mutiny of 2000, and will conclude with the circumstance surrounding the 2006 coup. It will focus on the prevention of future coups, civil disorder and insecurity, and may help shape future recommendations and strategies that New Zealand could consider regarding future engagement with Fiji. Some commentators in the past have attempted to simplify the cycle of coups and civil disorder that have occurred in Fiji as the sole result of poor race relations within the nation. While race relations between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians have always been a friction point, the various incidents involving civil disorder have involved far more factors than that posed by race relations between the two main ethnic groups. Each period of civil disorder that has occurred in Fiji since 1987, needs to be considered in isolation and based upon its own merit and factors.

On 1 July 1985, the Fiji Labour Party was formed. The political party included substantial representation and support from the Indo-Fijian community, including Mahendra Chaudhry, a prominent Indo-Fijian public servant.¹ The Fiji Labour Party campaigned as a coalition that included support from another political group, the National Fiji Party. This arrangement occurred due to the commonly held understanding that in the event of a political victory achieved by the Fiji Labour Party, the nation was not ready for an Indo-Fijian leader. Although the political party was dominated by Indo-Fijians, if successful it

¹ Field; Baba; Nabobo-Baba, *Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup*, Auckland, Reed Publishing Ltd, 2005, 37.

was agreed upon that an indigenous Fijian would subsequently lead the nation as Prime Minister.

On 12 April 1987 the coalition based on the Fiji Labour Party was victorious in the national general elections, and subsequently Mr Bravadra (an indigenous Fijian from Western Viti Levu) became the Prime Minister. The general election was a close-run affair with the Fiji Labour Party winning with 28 seats and a total of 46% of the total votes. When compared to the Alliance party (led by Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara) gaining 26 seats and a total of 48% of the votes.² Subsequently, seven cabinet positions went to indigenous Fijians while the remaining seven cabinet positions were held by Indo-Fijians. The victory of the coalition led by the Fiji Labour Party was a controversial event. Many indigenous Fijian's felt that the new government was heavily dominated by Indo-Fijians and the indigenous Fijian members (including the Prime Minister Bravada) were accused of being puppets of their Indo-Fijian counter-parts.³ Many indigenous Fijians were unhappy that Mr Bravada, an indigenous Fijian from Western Fiji, held a position of considerable power as Prime Minister. Fiji politics was (and arguably still is) dominated by Eastern Fijian's such as those from the Cakobau and Mara clans. Fiji was not ready for an Indo-Fijian dominated government, or a Prime Minister from western parts of Fiji.

In 1987 the Indo-Fijian population largely dominated commercial matters in Fiji, and totalled some 49% of the national population, while indigenous Fijians held a slightly lower percentage at 46% of the population.⁴ Many indigenous Fijians became nervous and feared that they risked losing both their land, and political power to the Indo-Fijians. To an

² Scarr, D, *Fiji, The Politics of Illusion*, (Sydney, New South Wales University Press, 2003), 35-36.

³ Field; Baba; Nabobo-Baba, *Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup*, Auckland, Reed Publishing Ltd, 2005, 37-38.

⁴ South Pacific Commission, "Population Of Fiji," (Paper produced by the University of the South Pacific, Noumea, 1990), 19.

indigenous Fijian, land ownership is of paramount importance given the belief in *Vanua*; an inter-connection between people of the land, and the land itself.⁵ The maintenance of political dominance was and still is, considered of significant importance to most indigenous Fijians. Many comparisons were made to the Aboriginals of Australia who had lost both land and power within their own country, to immigrant populations.⁶ Subsequently, a Nationalist movement called '*Taukei*', made up of indigenous Fijians, was formed. The *Taukei* movement were concerned about the marginalisation of indigenous Fijians within Fiji in comparison to their Indo-Fijian counterparts. The *Taukei* promoted active resistance to prevent the loss of land and power to the Indo-Fijians. On 24 April 1987 the *Taukei* conducted a march through Suva, with some 6,000 people, shouting the slogan 'Fiji for the Fijians'.⁷ With indigenous Fijian's feeling increasingly under threat, Fiji Nationalism grew out of control, a situation that was exploited by one senior officer within the RFMF who led the first Fiji coup, Lieutenant Colonel Rabuka.

Sit down everybody, sit down. This is a takeover. We apologise for any inconvenience caused. You are requested to stay cool. Stay down, sit down and listen to what we are going to tell you. Please stay calm, ladies and gentlemen. Mr Prime Minister, please lead your team down to the right. Policemen, keep the passage clear, stay down and remain calm. Mr Prime Minister, Sir, will you lead your team now.⁸ (Lieutenant Colonel Sitiveni Ligamanada Rabuka, of the RFMF. Fiji Parliament, Suva, 14 May 1987).

These were the words uttered by Rabuka on 14 May 1987, when he staged the first military coup ever, within the South Pacific. The action conducted by Rabuka and the RFMF effectively destroyed democracy within Fiji, and established a legacy of a coup culture that the nation continues to struggle with today.

⁵ Halapua, *Tradition, Lotu and Militarism in Fiji* Lautoka, Fiji Institute of Applied Studies, 2003, 81.

⁶ Field; Baba; Nabobo-Baba, *Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup*, Auckland, Reed Publishing Ltd, 2005, 38.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Lal, V, *FIJI, Coups in Paradise; Race, Politics and Military Intervention*, (New Delhi, Zed Books Ltd, 1990), 192.

Rabuka was an extremely ambitious 38 year old officer who aspired to achieve both wealth and power. Although Rabuka was not of chiefly status, he was a charismatic and astute leader who excelled in military matters, sport, and had a strong support base from within both the RFMF and the Methodist Church. At the time, Rabuka held the appointment as third in command, RFMF.⁹ However, Rabuka had become frustrated regarding the relatively slow progress of his military career to date. This officer aspired to command the RFMF, and had a chance of achieving this position when nominated by the expatriate commander of the RFMF, Brigadier Ian Thorpe of the New Zealand Army. However, partly due to a disciplinary incident that occurred in Sinai (Egypt) while deployed on operational service with the RFMF, Rabuka was not selected for command and instead, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau (an RFMF officer of chiefly status) was appointed Commander RFMF. Tonkin-Covell has revealed that at the time, there were a total of four candidates being considered for the position of Commander RFMF, and although Rabuka was one of the contenders, he did not feature highly on the order of merit. The Prime Minister and the President, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau elected to choose Nailatikau for the appointment of Commander RFMF.¹⁰ Rabuka was devastated by this development as he believed that he was the best man for the job. It was a frustrating time for such an ambitious individual, Rabuka sought advancement however, despite showing what he thought to be obvious potential, both goals seemed to be out of his reach. On departure from his last operational tour to Sinai, Rabuka was advised by the Methodist Chaplain, ‘You are too big for the Army. One day you will be Prime Minister of Fiji’.¹¹ Noting the disappointment of Rabuka, Thorpe had attempted to encourage Rabuka by telling him, that his ‘time would

⁹ Sharpham, *Rabuka of Fiji; The authorised biography of Major-General Sitiveni Rabuka*, Rockhampton, Central Queensland University Press, 2000, 109.

¹⁰ Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote from Tonkin-Covell, interview with Thorpe, August 2012, and from confidential files), 10 December 2012.

¹¹ Sharpham, *Rabuka of Fiji; The authorised biography of Major-General Sitiveni Rabuka*, Rockhampton, Central Queensland University Press, 2000, 80-81.

come', although Thorpe did not anticipate exactly how Rabuka's rise to power would eventuate!¹²

Lamenting his position over sessions with the kava bowl, Rabuka began to display political aspirations. Rabuka had a strong following within the RFMF, and also had friends who held influential positions of power, such as in the GCC (particularly from within the Mara clan) and the Methodist Church. Although it is a matter of conjecture who many of the other key instigators of the 1987 Coup were, in Rabuka, the opponents of the Bravada government had found the right man to execute a military coup.¹³ Rabuka, a staunch Methodist and indigenous Fijian, felt strongly that Fiji should be governed by indigenous Fijians, and not by Indo-Fijians. As such, Rabuka felt morally and religiously justified in potentially staging a military coup. When taking into account the poor state of East-West relations at this period of time during the cold war, Rabuka also felt suspicious of any potential socialist ideals and motives of the left-leaning Fiji Labour Party. Prime Minister Bravada was also unpopular in RFMF circles due to getting married to a former wife of an RFMF officer (said officer was considerably upset following the divorce, and marriage of his former wife to a prominent Fiji political figure).¹⁴ In the event of any potential coup, the government would find few supporters within the RFMF. Most importantly, Rabuka sensed an important opportunity. Here was a once in a lifetime opportunity to achieve both power and money.

¹² Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote from Tonkin-Covell interview with Thorpe, August 2012), 10 December 2012.

¹³ Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote), 8 March 2013.

¹⁴ Sharpham, J, *Rabuka of Fiji; The authorised biography of Major-General Sitiveni Rabuka*, Rockhampton, Central Queensland University Press, 2000, 84.

During Easter 1987, a meeting was held at the home of Methodist minister Tomasi Raikivi, arguably as a means for Rabuka and his supporters to plan the finer details of the pending coup. The list of attendee's at the subject meeting helps to illustrate the complexity and intrigue regarding internal politics within Fiji. Present at the meeting was Rabuka, Finau Mara (the paramount [Eastern Fiji] chief and former Prime Ministers eldest son), George Kadavuleuv (son of Sir George Cakobau [another prominent Chief from Eastern Fiji]), as well as a number of other disaffected prominent indigenous Fijian politicians who now found themselves outside of the current government circle of power.¹⁵ In addition to these supporters, John Sharpham claimed that former Fiji Prime Minister, Sir Ratu Kamisese Mara had himself directly sanctioned the 1987 Coup (although Sir Ratu Kamisese Mara subsequently denied this allegation). Research conducted by Tonkin-Covell also supports Sharpham's claim.¹⁶ As a result of this meeting, Rabuka subsequently formulated Operation Kidacala (surprise) and produced a written operational directive titled 'The Neutralisation of the Coalition Government of Fiji'.¹⁷

At 8 am on 14 May 1987, a convoy of RFMF trucks containing 10 soldiers, in patrol order, and armed with assault rifles, left the RFMF barracks in Nabua for Government House. The soldiers that Rabuka utilised to conduct the coup were hand picked for the task, and were all well known by Rabuka, being mainly fellow Rugby Union advocates who had previously played on the same team as him. To give some credit to Rabuka's credentials as an astute commander (if not an ethical military leader), his coup was well planned and executed. It is of interest that Rabuka had previously studied the theory of conducting

¹⁵ Field; Baba; Nabobo-Baba, *Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup*, Auckland, Reed Publishing Ltd., 2005, 38-39.

¹⁶ Tonkin-Covell, (Rabuka informed Tonkin-Covell that Ratu Mara "instructed me" to undertake the coup on the 14th hole of one of the [Suva] golf courses on a Sunday), direct quote from Tonkin-Covell interview with Rabuka, Fiji, 6 February 2013.

¹⁷ Field; Baba; Nabobo-Baba, *Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup*, Auckland, Reed Publishing Ltd, 2005, 40.

military coup's while at Command and Staff College in India in 1979. The coup was executed in a rapid and highly organised fashion, without a shot being fired. Troop deployments were well synchronised and went according to plan. With Rabuka now in charge of Government House, he swiftly moved to seize the Suva telephone exchange and at mid-afternoon he held a press conference.¹⁸ At the press conference, Rabuka stated that he had taken control of the government, sacked his superior officer's within the RFMF, neutralized the Governor-General, and made Christianity the official religion of Fiji. Rabuka also proposed to make significant changes to the Fiji Police Force. Rabuka then went on to suspend the Fiji Constitution and began to draft a new constitution which allowed indigenous Fijian's to dominate Fiji politics, and also provided immunity for himself against future prosecution for his crimes.¹⁹ In re-writing the constitution to protect himself from prosecution, Rabuka displayed a degree of strategic foresight and political cunning, if only in the best interest of his own future survival.

Although being a bloodless coup, the 1987 military take-over in Fiji alarmed both Australia and New Zealand. The Prime Minister of New Zealand, David Lange, was one of the first foreign politicians to voice his concerns at events in Fiji by the prompt condemnation of Rabuka's coup. Prime Minister Lange also initiated a plan regarding some possible form of military intervention by the NZDF as a result of fears about the security of New Zealand nationals living in Fiji.

The direction provided by Prime Minister Lange, for the NZDF to intervene in Fiji was met with reluctance from some senior personnel within both the NZDF and New Zealand

¹⁸ Scarr, *Fiji, The Politics of Illusion*, Sydney, New South Wales University Press, 2003, 71.

¹⁹ Lal, V, *Fiji, Coups in Paradise; Race, Politics and Military Intervention*, New Delhi, Zed Books Ltd, 1990, 197-198.

Government, although it was mainly through arguments at the NZDF service chief level that prevented military intervention. The RFMF were suspicious of Australia and New Zealand's intentions regarding Fiji and feared some form of military intervention. Subsequent to the coup occurring, the RFMF had established substantial infantry forces at both Nadi and Suva airports in order to mitigate any possible invasion of Fiji.²⁰ Prime Minister Lange's suggestion that a military aircraft, laden with armed New Zealand soldiers, land in Fiji unannounced and uninvited, would almost certainly have been viewed by the RFMF as a breach of sovereignty to which they would have responded accordingly. In addition to this factor, many soldiers and politicians within New Zealand held close professional and personal affiliations with their Fiji counterparts, and were dubious of any actual physical threat to New Zealand nationals residing in Fiji. Had such an event actually occurred, it may well have resulted in military disaster for New Zealand. Fortunately however, common sense dictated that no intervention occurred (partially as a result of stern resistance and advice to the Prime Minister from senior members of the NZDF such as the Chief of General Staff, Major-General John Mace and Chief of Defence Staff, Air Marshal Crooks).²¹

Having overthrown a democratically elected government, Rabuka stated that the coup was necessary to 'safeguard the Fijian land issue and the Fijian way of life'.²² Following the coup, Rabuka appointed a Council of Ministers to govern the nation, mainly made up of Sir Ratu Kamasese Mara's defeated cabinet members. Mara was appointed as Foreign Minister, while Rabuka became Home Affairs Minister, and Commander RFMF, having sacked his two military superiors. However, Rabuka lacked credibility within political

²⁰ Neal, D, (from discussion with LT COL Seruvakula [2002]), 17 December 2012.

²¹ Crowley, "New Zealand's Response To The Aircraft Hijack Incident During The 1987 Coup D'Etat In Fiji: A Study Of Civil-Military Relations In crisis," MA Thesis, Massey University 2002, 40.

²² Field; Baba; Nabobo-Baba, *Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup*, Auckland, Reed Publishing Ltd, 2005, 41.

circles and quickly fell from favour with other government members, who quickly attempted to remove him from power.

With Rabuka facing active resistance from within the Interim Fiji Government that he had established, on 26 September 1987 he conducted a second coup. This time however, Rabuka took matters a step further by formally terminating the Fiji Constitution and establishing himself as the new head of state. Rabuka's new regime was now made up almost entirely of politicians who held extreme nationalist views. At this point, Fiji was removed from the Commonwealth and became a republic. Knowing that he could not survive for long as a self-appointed military dictator, Rabuka appointed Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau (former Governor General) as President, with Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara becoming Prime Minister.²³ Now a far more secure power base had been established to support Rabuka. Having designed a government that supported his strategy of a nation governed by indigenous Fijian's, Rabuka promoted himself to Major-General and carried on with his new responsibilities as Commander RFMF. This promotion arguably helps to illustrate Rabuka's desire for money and power.²⁴ At this point in time, the RFMF had formally cemented its position as the ultimate power broker within Fiji politics.

Rabuka's coup came as some surprise, particularly within the South Pacific. The effects this military coup had far reaching consequences. Economically, the results were particularly negative. Between the period 1995 and 2007 some 63,417 residents permanently left Fiji, of which in excess of 80% were Indo-Fijians.²⁵ With many of the

²³ Tonkin-Covell, J, "The Very Long Way Back: The Republic of Fiji Military Forces and the Neutrality Convention". *New Zealand Journal of Defence Studies*, Vol. 1, (2007), 12.

²⁴ Field; Baba; Nabobo-Baba, *Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup*, Auckland, Reed Publishing Ltd, 2005, 43.

²⁵ Xing, "Socio-Economic Determinants for Poverty Reduction: The case of Fiji," MA Thesis, Massey University, 2010, 48.

departing Indo-Fijians being wealthy and successful businessmen, this was a significant blow to the Fiji economy. Tourism, one of Fiji's primary sources of income, rapidly declined in the years following the coup (although tourism did recover in the medium-term). The Fiji dollar lost approximately 33% value, wages declined, food prices increased, and the overall economy dropped by approximately 11%.²⁶ A significant factor that supported the economic decline of Fiji was the corrupt manner in which some of the politicians conducted themselves. By 1995 the National Bank of Fiji had collapsed, with a total amount of debts in excess of \$220 million. Many of these debts were owed by paramount Fiji chiefs and politicians who had taken out personal loans, however then refused to repay the debts. Poverty became much more widespread, with this factor still being a significant issue in contemporary Fiji.²⁷ Credibility of governance was also lacking with many citizens of Fiji living close to, or below, the poverty line, while many politicians and chiefs displayed obvious signs of apparent wealth (such as owning properties in Suva that were generally considered to be well outside the financial means of a civil servant). In contemporary downtown Suva, some locals will still jokingly refer to the Great Council of Chiefs as the 'Great Council of Thieves'.²⁸

Of primary significance, was the fact that the first coup, staged by Rabuka, established an extremely dangerous precedent, and one that even now, will take many decades to overcome. From 1987 onwards, the RFMF, which already held a prestigious position within Fiji, saw itself as the ultimate power broker within Fiji political circles that could act against the Fiji Government if and when it saw fit. The RFMF had crossed the invisible line that divides the military from government, and soldiers from their political

²⁶ Xing, "Socio-Economic Determinants for Poverty Reduction: The case of Fiji," MA Thesis, Massey University, 2010, 39.

²⁷ Field; Baba; Nabobo-Baba, *Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup*, Auckland, Reed Publishing Ltd, 2005, 43-45.

²⁸ Scarr, *Fiji, The Politics of Illusion*, Sydney, New South Wales University Press, 2003, p.xvii.

counterparts. Instead of being a tool of national power, and a servant to the government, the RFMF had created itself as an organisation that was not afraid to take power via military force if required to meet its own political objectives. While the RFMF remained an important institution, an ethical and psychological barrier had been breached. Many indigenous Fijian's firmly believed that what had occurred was both morally and ethically sound, and was a necessity in order to mitigate the risk of further internal instability. It is worthy of note at this point that as with later coups, the Fiji Police Force had been unable to control the demonstration held in Suva on 24 April, a factor that may have served to encourage the RFMF into an internal security role. With many indigenous Fijians adhering to strict Christian tenets and together with support from the Methodist Church, many indigenous Fijians believed that the coup was ultimately sanctioned by God.²⁹

In 1990 a new Fiji Constitution was confirmed, allowing for a 70 seat House of Representatives, divided on racial lines, which effectively allowed the Chiefs of Eastern Fiji (i.e. those from the Cakobau and Mara clans) to dominate Fiji politics. The new Fiji Constitution dictated that only indigenous Fijian's could hold the positions of President, Prime Minister, and Commander RFMF. Within Fiji, and some international circles, the military actions of 1987 were widely viewed as being both ethically sound and a necessary evil. However, the 1990 constitution can easily be described as racist legislation that is biased towards indigenous Fijians, particularly those from the dominant Eastern clans.

During the 1994 elections, Rabuka was now out of the military, and became the leader of the new Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei (SVT) political party. SVT was by a highly nationalist political party, entirely made up of indigenous Fijians. SVT was successful

²⁹ Tonkin-Covell, "The Very Long Way Back: The Republic of Fiji Military Forces & the Neutrality Convention," *New Zealand Journal Of Defence Studies* 1 (2007), 12.

during the 1994 elections, and together with other coalition partners (ironically the Fiji Labour Party), became the new government, with Rabuka holding office as Prime Minister.

Fiji's 1990 Constitution, created in part by Rabuka, required to be reviewed seven years after its confirmation. Therefore, in 1997, with support from former New Zealand Governor General Sir Paul Reeves, a review of the Fiji Constitution was conducted by an independent commission, to enhance the racial based governance towards a more inclusive system. A desired outcome of the new constitution would be the support of a harmonious multi-racial society and government within Fiji. The independent review commission made the following recommendations:³⁰

- a. Adherence of the parliamentary form of government in which the Prime Minister and Cabinet members are elected by members of parliament.
- b. Identifying the role of political parties in the formation of governments that are able to command a majority in the House of Representatives.
- c. Allowing for incentives to encourage cooperation among ethnic communities in the formation and support to political parties.
- d. Gradual degradation of communal representation however, provision of assurances to all communities of continued adequate representation within Parliament.
- e. Provision of assurances that the interests and rights of all communities would be protected by an over arching multi-ethnic government.

³⁰ Green, M, "*Fiji's Short-Lived Experiment in Executive Power-Sharing, May-December 2006,*" (Discussion Paper 2009/2, State Society and Governance in Melanesia, Canberra, The Australian National University, 2009), 1-2.

The most important recommendation for the new constitution involved the promotion of multi-racial cooperation across ethnic lines. The commission recommended that the House of Representatives include a mixture of open and communal seats. Open seats would not include any restriction on the ethnic background of candidates or electors. It was proposed that 25 seats remain communal with the remainder of the 45 seats labelled as open. A victory in communal seats would not allow for a majority in the House of Representatives. To provide further incentives to encourage multi-ethnic representation, the commission also recommended that election to open seats be via fifteen separate constituencies.³¹

Unfortunately the democratic reforms offered by the commission proved to be too radical for the Fiji Government of the time. The Parliamentary Select Committee decided to reverse the ratio of open to communal seats and rejected the recommendation for multi-member constituencies. However, the Select Committee supported the goal of the encouragement of multi-ethnic governance, but recommended that this be achieved via mandatory power-sharing. Thus s.99 of the 1997 Constitution was formed. S.99 required the Prime Minister, when establishing Cabinet, to:

Invite all parties whose membership in the House of Representatives comprises at least 10 per cent of the total membership of the House to be represented in Cabinet in proportion to their numbers in the House.³²

The Prime Minister was still expected to command a majority, although there were few rules regarding the formulation and conduct of Cabinet membership. Within the constraints of the new constitution, a general election occurred in 1999. The Fiji Labour Party achieved a victory at this election, winning 37 of the 70 available seats. However the

³¹Green, M, "*Fiji's Short-Lived Experiment in Executive Power-Sharing, May-December 2006*," Discussion Paper 2009/2, State Society and Governance in Melanesia, Canberra, The Australian National University, 2009, 1-2.

³² Ibid, 2.

power sharing provisions detailed under S.99 proved to be problematic in the confirmation of Cabinet.

Despite the power-sharing provisions detailed under the 1997 constitution, the victory of the Fiji Labour Party once again allowed racial and nationalist sentiments to arise. The Nationalist politician Mr Ilisa Duvuloco, warned the media that ‘Fiji is not yet ready for an Indian Prime Minister’.³³ Once the election result had been announced, a question asked by many Fijians revolved around who would be the new Prime Minister. With the Fiji population aware of this importance, some rigorous debate occurred within the Fiji Labour Party. Finally a decision was made. On 19 May 1999, the new Government was sworn in with Mr Mahendra Chaudhry as the Prime Minister. Fiji now had its first ever Indo-Fijian Prime Minister.

In 1999, Fiji as a nation was not mature enough to accept an Indo-Fijian Prime Minister. Although Prime Minister Chaudhry enjoyed a large support base within the Indo-Fijian community, his elevation to Prime Minister was not welcomed by a many indigenous Fijians, particularly those holding nationalist views and aligned with the Taukei movement. Having taken office, Chaudhry received a cool reception during his first meeting with the GCC. Chaudhry also found himself under attack from indigenous Fijians’ via negative media coverage in the Fiji Times.³⁴ Despite external attempts to undermine the credibility of his government, Chaudhry displayed competence as Prime Minister. Within 12 months of taking office, Chaudhry’s economic reforms resulted in significant improvements within the economy, including enhancing the standard of living among those economically disadvantaged Fijians.

³³ Field; Baba; Nabobo-Baba, *Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji’s 2000 Coup*, Auckland, Reed Publishing Ltd, 2005, 54.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 62.

In addition to the perceived problem of being of Indo-Fijian lineage, Chaudhry faced hard decisions within his first year of taking office that further decreased his popularity among nationalist leaning indigenous Fijians. Chaudhry also displayed a level of confidence in decision making that bordered on arrogance, and he did not often conduct wide consultation prior to reaching a decision. This perceived arrogance was also a significant factor that degraded Chaudhry's popularity.³⁵ One of the harder decisions that Chaudhry made revolved around the Agricultural Landlord and Tenants Act (ALTA). Under the ALTA, many land leases held by Indo-Fijian sugar cane farmers were due to expire, a fact that potentially left the current lease holders financially out of pocket after decades of investment on their leased properties. Chaudhry introduced legislation that provided financial bonuses of up to \$30,000 (Fiji dollars) per farmer (mainly Indo-Fijian) that were forced to evict their land. Given that many indigenous Fijian land owners were relatively poor despite owning land, such a move was seen as corrupt and biased by many indigenous Fijians. The Taukei movement took advantage of the negative public sentiment against the government as a result of this legislation, and began an active campaign of agitations, with many shadowy figures of the 1987 coup (such as Mr Rabuka, and Mr Kubuabola) being accused of attempting to undermine the Fiji Government.³⁶

By April 2000, the atmosphere within Suva became tense and rumours regarding a potential coup or possible collapse of the government were common. The Taukei movement staged a protest march through Suva on 21 April 2000. Unlike the coup of 1987, in 2000 the RFMF largely maintained an honourable distance from politics. The exception to this situation however, being the actions of the Special Forces unit, '1st Meridian, Counter Revolutionary Warfare Unit' (CRWU). In a fall from grace, part of the

³⁵ Field; Baba; Nabobo-Baba, *Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup*, Auckland, Reed Publishing Ltd, 2005, 61.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 67.

CRWU actively supported the uprisings of 2000.³⁷ At the time, the Acting Commander of the RFMF, Colonel George Kadavulevu, went as far as to state:

The present government was nominated by the majority of the population and therefore the military must only be used to support and promote the ideas of the government so nominated.³⁸

At this point it appeared that the RFMF had learned a lesson from past mistakes made in 1987 and were supporting, rather than opposing, the government of Fiji. The Commanding Officer of 3 FIR, Lieutenant Colonel Bill Seruvakula, even went as far as to plan for the defence of Parliament.³⁹

While the majority of the RFMF maintained a stance of positive support towards the Fiji Government, the same could not be said of the Fiji Police Force. Fiji Police Commissioner Mr Isikia Savua, appeared unconcerned regarding the break-down of civil order in Suva stating, 'I don't believe we'll continue to have peaceful marches if their [Taukei] grievances are not heard.'⁴⁰ Savua appeared to sympathise with those people protesting against the government, perhaps to the point of supporting them. Many Fijians viewed Savua's statement as a threat against the Fiji Government. Many informed persons of that era, including Mr Michael Field, Police Commissioner Andrew Hughes, and Colonel Paul Manueli (RFMF), have suggested that Mr Savua (a known associate of Rabuka) actively supported the overthrow of the Fiji Government in 2000.⁴¹ Andrew Hughes claimed that Savua deliberately thinned out the police numbers in Suva, which then made police

³⁷ Tonkin-Covell, "The Very Long Way Back: The Republic of Fiji Military Forces & the Neutrality Convention," *New Zealand Journal Of Defence Studies* 1 (2007),12.

³⁸ Field; Baba; Nabobo-Baba, *Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup*, Auckland, Reed Publishing Ltd, 2005, 69.

³⁹ Neal, D, (from discussion with Seruvakula, 2002), 18 December 2012.

⁴⁰ Field; Baba; Nabobo-Baba, *Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup*, Auckland, Reed Publishing Ltd, 2005, 69.

⁴¹ Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote from various interviews, Fiji, 2004), 10 December 2012.

intervention impossible at the time of the Speight coup.⁴² Certainly no active planning was conducted by the Fiji Police to support the government during this period, despite the fact that Savua was aware that a coup was likely. Political events in Fiji over the past 25 years have included many such aspects of intrigue and speculation.

One aspect of mystery regarding the coup and mutiny during 2000 involves speculation as to what people and organisations supported the unrest that occurred during that year. However, despite ongoing confusion regarding this question, the unrest of 2000 attracted a particularly opportunistic individual, Mr George Speight. Speight was an unsuccessful businessman who has been accused of involvement with many dubious business ventures in the past. His failed business ventures had left him with few personal financial resources. Speight had recently been sacked by Chaudhry from a governmental position within the state owned company Fiji Pine Ltd, for allegedly receiving a \$5000 (US dollars) bribe from a potential investor (note that a fire at the company at the time destroyed relevant records, an occurrence of some convenience to Speight).⁴³ As such, Speight had little to lose in mounting a civil coup. Commentators have stated that Speight did not have the mental agility or the military training required to mount a successful coup, and that he was merely a lackey of other governmental opponents. It is quite possible that Speight was used as a pawn of cunning masters, who have largely remained hidden from subsequent detailed scrutiny.

Another mystery of the 2000 civil disorder revolves around the actions of the CRWU. The Special Forces Unit was established in 1987 on the orders of Rabuka. The unit was styled

⁴² Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote from interview with Hughes, 2004), 10 December 2012.

⁴³ Field; Baba; Nabobo-Baba, *Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup*, Auckland, Reed Publishing Ltd, 2005, 64.

on the British 22nd Special Air Service Regiment (SAS), and was led by an indigenous Fijian named Mr Ligairi, a decorated veteran NCO of the British SAS. Members of the CRWU were all highly trained indigenous Fijians who were hand-picked from the ranks of the RFMF. CRWU members received training in the Japanese martial art Hapkido, and were well supplied with small arms, including Israeli Uzi submachine guns. Unfortunately, this unit had always been focused on internal domestic security matters rather than strategic reconnaissance roles normally favoured as a primary output of Special Forces. The CRWU also maintained a confusing status of command within the RFMF, whereby they did not answer to the RFMF Land Force Commander. Ironically it was part of the CRWU, the unit responsible for counter-terrorism within Fiji, who became the terrorists in 2000.⁴⁴ Prior to the civil coup of 2000, Speight and soldiers of the CRWU met in a residential address in Suva to plan for the coming action. Small arms and explosives were also stockpiled. Speight's link to the CRWU is hard to explain. Speight had no military background, and the initiation of formal links between him and the CRWU are difficult to substantiate. Having assisted in preparatory planning for the coup, the CRWU conducted a week of training in Vanua Levu. On completion of the training, some of which was carried out on the farm owned by Rabuka, the CRWU attended a church service at the same location. Despite some circumstantial evidence and accusations linking Rabuka and Ligairi to the planning of the 2000 civil coup, both individuals have denied any involvement in events, although Ligairi was jailed for his part.⁴⁵

On 19 May 2000, the Taukei held a protest march, led by nationalist politician Mr Duvuloco, through Suva with approximately 1500 supporters. During the protest, Savua

⁴⁴ Tonkin-Covell, "The Very Long Way Back: The Republic of Fiji Military Forces & the Neutrality Convention," *New Zealand Journal Of Defence Studies* 1 (2007), 15.

⁴⁵ Field; Baba; Nabobo-Baba; *Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup*, Auckland, Reed Publishing Ltd, 2005, 66-67.

and the Police Force showed no interest in maintaining any form of civil order. While the protest was occurring, and utilising the civil unrest as a diversion, Speight and a small armed band of CRWU soldiers entered parliament, firing shots into the ceiling.

This is a civil coup. Hold tight. Nobody move!
(Mr George Speight in Parliament House, Suva, 19 May 2000).⁴⁶

Unlike the carefully orchestrated coup of 1987 conducted by Rabuka, Speight's civil coup appeared to be disorganised. Speight and his men were joined by many Taukei protestors in the Parliament buildings, while members of Parliament were taken hostage. Within the central business district of Suva chaos reigned, with Taukei protestors looting shops at will while in most cases, the Fiji Police refused to intervene. Despite the apparent disorganisation of the coup, by the evening of 19 May 2000, Speight's men effectively controlled Parliament and a large number of hostages. A large number of Speight supporters included members of the Cakobau tribal group that Speight aligned himself with.

During the two month period following Speight's seizure of Parliament and hostage taking, there occurred a period of tense standoff between the supporters of Speight, and the RFMF. Chaos reigned in Suva including continued riots, looting and destruction of private property. Some 167 shops were looted in Suva, creating some \$30 million (Fiji dollars) in loss and damages.⁴⁷ There were also incidents of civil disorder occurring elsewhere in Fiji, including violence and intimidation of Indo-Fijians by Speight sympathisers. In Korovou, a town in the Tailevu province (a region from which Speight originated) a group of armed

⁴⁶ Field; Baba; Nabobo-Baba; *Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup*, Auckland, Reed Publishing Ltd, 2005, 82.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 103.

rebels actually took over the town, seizing the police station and murdering a policeman. In Korovou, Indo-Fijian's were intimidated, beaten and had their private property vandalised. Within Suva itself, a policeman named Filipino Seavula was murdered by Speight supporters. In this incident, Seavula confronted armed rebels and was gunned down as a result. Another high profile murder occurred in Suva during this period when Red Cross worker, John Scott, was murdered in his Suva home.⁴⁸ While chaos reigned in Suva, Police Commissioner Savua, seemed unconcerned regarding the break down in civil order. Despite some acts of professionalism and bravery by some of the rank and file, the Fiji Police Force seemed ineffective. Savua's brother, an RFMF Major, defected to the rebels during this period. Throughout the period of civil disorder, Savua claimed that the police were loyal to President Mara and the 1997 constitution. This claim has subsequently been questioned.

The armed stand off between Mr Speight and his rebels in opposition to the RFMF, did result in some sporadic exchanges of gun fire however, in general the standoff between the two groups appeared to be symbolic and unusual. While a military cordon was put in place by the RFMF on 26 May 2000, the cordon was not strictly adhered to and some personnel were able to transit to and from Parliament (albeit this access was mainly restricted to journalists and people involved with the provision of food and water). Given the number of hostages taken, and the presence of civilians (especially foreign journalists), both sides showed considerable constraint in the interests of avoiding unrestricted violence. It was with some relief that both Speight and the RFMF attempted to achieve their respective objectives without resorting to unrestrained armed conflict. The RFMF in particular appeared to be comfortable in maintaining a form of military cordon around Parliament

⁴⁸Field, M, *Swimming with Sharks: Tales from the South Pacific Frontline*, (Auckland, Penguin Books, 2010), 189.

buildings that they had established in late May. Towards the end of the confrontation however, many RFMF soldiers were becoming angry and frustrated, and would have welcomed an opportunity to engage in combat with the rebels.

Speight claimed to be pursuing the rights of indigenous Fijians. He named a president by the name of Mr Seniloli, to replace President Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, and claimed that he had abrogated the 1997 constitution. Ratu Mara, citing the 1997 constitution, sacked Prime Minister Chaudhry and his ministers, claiming the constitution allowed him to do so due to the fact they were ineffective in performing their duties while in a state of emergency. Ratu Mara then appointed an interim government. However, on 29 May 2000 Commodore Bainimarama (Commander RFMF) mobilized all RFMF reservists and together with Savua and Rabuka, effectively ordered President Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara to step down from presidency, arguably a form of passive coup, albeit in this situation some would argue that Bainimarama had little choice but to restore civil order. Bainimarama had decided that matters had got out of hand and moved to actively control the situation. Bainimarama effectively took over temporary leadership of Fiji declaring martial law and assuming executive authority of the Fiji Interim Government.⁴⁹

Bainimarama offered Speight amnesty from prosecution if he agreed to peacefully end the civil coup. Speight meanwhile, proposed a '10 Point Plan,' that included a return of Fiji political power to the GCC, in order to support the rights of indigenous Fijians. Bainimarama was able to compromise, and named a Fiji Interim Government, led by Qarase (Chaudhry was not reinstated as Prime Minister). There were no Indo-Fijians in

⁴⁹ Field, *Swimming with Sharks: Tales from the South Pacific Frontline*, Auckland, Penguin Books, 2010, 190.

the new government and Bainimarama promised to review the rights of indigenous Fijians. However, none of Speight's men were named as part of the Government, and while Bainimarama had offered Speight immunity from prosecution, this proposal had not been formalised.

On 13 July 2000, the Manikau accord was signed between conflicting parties; a deal that planned to restore law and order to Fiji. The new Fiji Interim Government was confirmed and the siege officially ended, with weapons being handed back to the RFMF. Speight and his supporters were jubilant, believing that they had achieved some form of victory.⁵⁰

Bainimarama allowed the rebels to return to normality with the latter believing they were immune from prosecution. However, on 26 Jul 2000 Bainimarama ordered the RFMF to arrest Speight on charges of treason. The supporters of Speight were also rounded up and arrested. Speight was convicted of treason and sentenced to death however this sentence was amended to life imprisonment. A similar fate was shared by other key coup plotters, including Mr Vakalalabure and Mr Duvuloco. Treason charges against nine CRWU soldiers were dropped. They were subsequently tried under RFMF military law.⁵¹ The supporters of Speight saw the move of Bainimarama against Speight as a dishonourable breach of trust, and later responded accordingly.

On 8 August 2000 an RFMF military patrol was ambushed at Naitasiri by armed rebels, an incident that resulted in the deaths of one RFMF soldier, one policeman and the wounding of three RFMF soldiers. The policeman was an Indo-Fijian by the name of Raf Dumar. This police officer was beaten to death having been captured by the rebels. Elsewhere in

⁵⁰ Field; Baba; Nabobo-Baba, *Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup*, Auckland, Reed Publishing Ltd, 2005, 210.

⁵¹ Ibid, 241.

Fiji more harassment of Indo-Fijians by Speight supporters occurred and an Air Fiji plane was temporarily hijacked in Savusavu.⁵²

Naitasiri Chief Inoke Takiveikata, was outraged at Bainimarama's treatment of Speight (a member of his tribe) following the signing of the Manikau accord. As a means of revenge, on 2 November 2000, approximately 40 soldiers of the CRWU, led by Captain Shane Stevens, attacked Queen Elizabeth Barracks and tried to kill Bainimarama. The Commander RFMF only narrowly escaped with his life due to the bravery and quick thinking displayed by his close protection team. While the attempt against his life was occurring, Bainimarama jumped out of his office window, and sprinted down a heavily forested slope to the rear of the barracks while under concentrated small-arms fire from the rebels. Casualties occurred on both sides and in a bizarre situation, Rabuka arrived in full ceremonial uniform, claiming to be there to mediate between the RFMF and the mutineers. This claim by Rabuka, and his true motives, has since been questioned.⁵³

3 FIR, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Bill Seruvakula, and led by Lieutenant Colonel Jone Baledrokadroka (as acting Commanding Officer) were in no mood to engage in a lengthy siege with the rebel CRWU soldiers. 3 FIR quickly counter-attacked and regained control of Queen Elizabeth Barracks. Eight soldiers died in the fighting with 18 being wounded. Three of the deaths were RFMF loyalists while the remainder were members of the CRWU. In a controversial incident, it has been alleged that five CRWU soldiers were captured alive by the RFMF and subsequently tortured to death in a particularly brutal

⁵²Field; Baba; Nabobo-Baba, *Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup*, Auckland, Reed Publishing Ltd, 2005, 234.

⁵³ Tonkin-Covell, (from interviews with LT COL Bill Seruvakula, COL Jone Baledrokadroka, MAJ Save Seruvatu, 2004, 2007, 2009, [direct quote]), 8 March 2013.

fashion.⁵⁴ The mutiny of November 2000 brought a decisive end to the civil disorder of that year and Fiji slowly returned to a form of stability, while the coup plotters and mutineers were prosecuted. However, the alleged actions of Bainimarama and the RFMF against the captured CRWU soldiers killed in captivity arguably may have shaped Fiji's next coup.

In the aftermath of the coup of 2000, particularly noting the initial confusion of Speight and his followers, it appeared that Speight might possibly have expected other key Fiji persons to come to his aid and lead the civil action. However, no such assistance eventuated and Speight was forced to remain an unlikely figurehead of the civil coup. Evidence suggests that Speight had supporters from both the Cakobau Clan and the Methodist Church. Circumstantial evidence also suggests that Rabuka, Ligairi, Savua, Duvuloco, and even Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara may have at least passively, if not actively, supported the civil coup however, this remains a matter of speculation. Certainly Rabuka's involvement with the CRWU prior to the coup, and his mysterious appearance at Queen Elizabeth Barracks in uniform, the day the CRWU tried to murder Bainimarama, does place Rabuka under suspicion of supporting the coup. There were also unsubstantiated claims that Rabuka had attempted to bribe the Commanding Officer of 3 FIR (Lieutenant Colonel Seruvakula) in order to gain support for the coup from the RFMF. However, this allegation was unable to be proven either way in court. The events of 2000 remain clouded. Despite the alleged atrocities committed by members of the RFMF against captured rebel CRWU soldiers, it was the RFMF who by and large held the line. With the exemption of elements of the rogue CRWU unit, the RFMF ultimately restored civil order in 2000, and supported the civil power.

⁵⁴Field, *Swimming with Sharks: Tales from the South Pacific Frontline*, Auckland, Penguin Books, 2010, 202.

A general election was held in Fiji in 2001. The Soqosoqo Duavata Lewenivanua (SDL) party achieved a reasonable majority in this election. Subsequently, the new Prime Minister, Mr Laisenia Qarase established a Cabinet, together with the Conservative Alliance Matanitu Vanua (CAMV) party. This new government was notable in being heavily dominated by indigenous Fijians and had a reputation for harbouring nationalist sentiments. However on forming Cabinet, Prime Minister Qarase was accused of not adhering to the power sharing provisions detailed under Article S.99 of the 1997 Fiji Constitution. Article S.99 clearly states that on forming a Cabinet, the Prime Minister must share power within the House of Representatives.⁵⁵

Qarase was subsequently challenged by the Fiji Court of Appeal for having acted in defiance of the 1997 Constitution power sharing provisions in regards to forming Cabinet. Having been ordered to do so by the Supreme Court, in 2004 Qarase offered token Cabinet portfolios to the Fiji Labour Party. The latter rejected his offer.

During the 2006 general election, Prime Minister Qarase's SDL party again achieved victory. Subsequently, it came with some surprise that Qarase expressed a willingness to allow compromise in allowing adequate multi-party and multi-ethnic representation when forming Cabinet. In particular, Qarase offered Chaudhry (Fiji Labour Party) a substantial Cabinet portfolio which the latter grudgingly accepted. However, despite the multi-racial tenets of Article S.99 of the 1997 constitution, democracy had not yet reached a maturity to allow for transparent power-sharing within government. As a result, the Fiji Government's

⁵⁵ Green, "*Fiji's Short-Lived Experiment in Executive Power-Sharing, May-December 2006*," Discussion Paper 2009/2, State Society and Governance in Melanesia, Canberra, The Australian National University, 2009, 2.

experiment in executive power-sharing was short, and unsuccessful.⁵⁶ Despite controversy, the government was democratically elected and was at least showing signs of attempting to adhere to legitimate democracy. During this period however, Qarase faced a far more significant opponent than Chaudhry, namely Commander RFMF, Commodore Frank Bainimarama.

Bainimarama, was and still is, a strong, decisive and opinionated military commander. During the mutiny of November 2000 Bainimarama had swiftly and brutally quelled the uprising. Bainimarama, as commander RFMF, fell into a familiar paradigm. He saw himself and the RFMF as the ultimate power-broker within Fiji politics, and had no qualms in resorting to physical intimidation and violence when faced with an uncooperative government. Bainimarama drew comparisons between the RFMF and other military forces (such as those of Indonesia and Turkey) which he considered to be the ultimate tool of legitimacy due to their ability to directly affect governmental policy, if required.⁵⁷ What made Bainimarama significantly different from Rabuka, was that he claimed to be a promoter of multi-ethnic democratic tenets.

Qarase and Bainimarama, both being leaders with strong personalities, often disagreed in opinion. Bainimarama was suspicious of Qarase and the SDL, as he believed that the latter were overtly sympathetic to Speight and his supporters during the 2000 coup. Matters became tense when the government proposed a ‘Promotion of Reconciliation, Tolerance

⁵⁶ Green, “*Fiji’s Short-Lived Experiment in Executive Power-Sharing, May-December 2006*,” Discussion Paper 2009/2, State Society and Governance in Melanesia, Canberra, The Australian National University, 2009, 17.

⁵⁷ Fraenkel, J; Firth, S; Lal, B, *The 2006 Military Takeover In Fiji; A Coup To End All Coups*, (Canberra, The Australian University Press), 2009, 39.

and Unity Bill' (RTU).⁵⁸ Under the proposed RTU Bill, amnesty would potentially be offered to the coup plotters and mutineers of 2000, including the very people responsible for plotting, and almost succeeding, in Bainimarama's own murder at Queen Elizabeth Barracks on 2 November 2000. It is also interesting to note that Speight's brother was a Qarase Cabinet Minister.

Further to the disagreement over the RTU bill, Bainimarama took exception to the proposed Qoliqoli bill; an item of legislation that potentially allowed for a form of seabed and foreshore ownership to pass over to indigenous Fijians. Here there was a potential for inter-tribal clashes over seabed and foreshore claims. Bainimarama also claimed that the government was corrupt, citing misappropriation of public money by government officials dealing with the government owned company 'Fijian Holdings Limited'.⁵⁹ Bainimarama claimed that the Qarase government was racist, corrupt, and illegitimate. However, there may have been far more pragmatic reasons for Bainimarama's coup.

During the RFMF suppression of the November 2000 mutiny, five rebel CRWU soldiers had allegedly been tortured and killed while in the custody of the RFMF. As Commander RFMF, Bainimarama had been accused of some direct responsibility for these murders. During 2005-2006, the Fiji Police Commissioner (a senior Australian police officer by the name of Mr Andrew Hughes) was desperately attempting to improve policing and crime prevention within Fiji. By all accounts Hughes had made some very good progress. However, central to his efforts was the requirement to bring to justice those responsible for the alleged torture and murder of the captured CRWU soldiers in November 2000. By late

⁵⁸ Fraenkel, J; Firth, S; Lal, B, *The 2006 Military Takeover In Fiji; A Coup To End All Coups*, (Canberra, The Australian University Press), 2009, 9.

⁵⁹ Larmour, P, "From Clean up to Fiac: Anti-Corruption in Fiji's Post Coup Politics." *Crime Law And Social Change* 53, no. 1 (2009), 55.

2006 it was widely speculated that Mr Hughes was close to reaching a conclusion to his investigations into the atrocities of 2000, and was close to making some arrests. Due to Bainimarama's alleged involvement in the killing of the five CRWU soldiers, he was potentially in danger of arrest and subsequent criminal proceedings. Bainimarama ordered the Fiji Police to cease the investigation and told Hughes to step down as Police Commissioner. Under analysis, there is reason to suspect that Bainimarama conducted the coup of 2006 to avoid a potential conviction, and a subsequent jail term for involvement in the torture and murder of the captured CRWU soldiers during the November 2000 mutiny.⁶⁰ Other sources have claimed that Bainimarama was supported by elements of the Fiji Labour Party and the Indo-Fijian Community with the intent of installing more Indo-Fijians into government.

In March 2006 the RFMF staged a show of strength in Suva with 500 soldiers marching through the centre of town in full battle order. The message was clear and aggressive; the RFMF was prepared to use force to remove the Fiji Government from power. In early October 2006 Bainimarama gave the government a three week ultimatum to resign. In late November 2006, Bainimarama visited New Zealand to attend a family celebration and was met by Prime Minister Helen Clark for mediation purposes.⁶¹ Despite the attempts of foreign mediation, on 5 December 2006 the RFMF overthrew Prime Minister Qarase and the Fiji Government.⁶²

International reaction to the military coup of 2006 was swift and uncompromising, particularly from the governments of Australia and New Zealand. The New Zealand

⁶⁰ Neal, D.J, (from interview with Green, M, 25 June 2011), 18 December 2012.

⁶¹ Fraenkel; Firth; Lal, *The 2006 Military Takeover In Fiji; A Coup To End All Coups*, Canberra, The Australian University Press, 2009, 33.

⁶² Ibid, 72.

government supported Qarase and voiced significant concern regarding the latest coup, and immediately imposed a series of sanctions upon Fiji.⁶³ New Zealand had been providing some assistance to Fiji in terms of military support (primarily in the form of Mutual Assistance Training Teams [MATT] and advisors) to develop leadership within the RFMF. New Zealand, alongside other nations such as Australia, also provided financial aid, support to governance within Fiji, and helped to police economic resources within Fiji's EEZ. Following Bainimarama's coup, New Zealand's annual provision of approximately \$6.5 million (New Zealand dollars) to Fiji was temporarily halted,⁶⁴ and travel bans were imposed on perpetrators and supporters of the 2006 coup and the illegal regime. New Zealand's travel bans include members of the RFMF, and their immediate family members. New Zealand has also suspended Fiji participation in the 'Recognised Seasonal Employer' policy; a policy that previously allowed members temporary work visa's to live and work in New Zealand. The government of New Zealand also banned military contact and restricted diplomatic contact with Fiji. Representation of Fijian sporting teams and generic sporting contacts in New Zealand, have also been restricted.⁶⁵ Australia's reaction to the coup was even more significant. Australia despatched warships to the region, and a small number of armed members of the Australian SAS Regiment were despatched to Suva to safeguard Australian national interests. The ADF even went to the extreme of planning for a Services Protected Evacuation (SPE) of Australian Nationals from Fiji. However, as with the New Zealand experience of 1987, common sense prevailed and no foreign military intervention occurred. The RFMF is the third largest military in the South Pacific,

⁶³Green, "*Fiji's Short-Lived Experiment in Executive Power-Sharing, May-December 2006*," Discussion Paper 2009/2, State Society and Governance in Melanesia, Canberra, The Australian National University, 2009, 3.

⁶⁴Robertson, P, "*Currents: New Zealand's International Aid & Development Agency*," (Wellington, NZ Aid, 2009), 45.

⁶⁵"Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade," New Zealand Government, accessed 19 February 2011, www.mfat.govt.nz.

and taking on well armed Fijian Infantry on their own sovereign territory, would likely have resulted in significant casualties.

Fiji was suspended from the Pacific Islands Forum, although the Melanesian Spearhead Group appeared to hold a neutral stance regarding the actions of the RFMF. Fiji was also fully suspended from the Commonwealth on 1 September 2009. Of interest, is the fact that the RFMF is still allowed to participate in United Nations Peace Keeping Operations, such as those maintained in Iraq. However, New Zealand has advocated Fiji's expulsion from such activities due to the illegal actions of the RFMF within Fiji.

Bainimarama sacked the Fiji Government and replaced most of the senior ministers with RFMF officers. Bainimarama also appointed army officers to become permanent secretaries of certain government bodies. He also sacked a number of Chief Executive Officers of government owned companies. Bainimarama expelled many foreign government officials including Mr Hughes, an Australian senior policeman who held the appointment of Fiji Commissioner of Police. Bainimarama also later expelled New Zealand High Commissioner, Mr Michael Green on 12 June 2007.⁶⁶ On April 2009 Bainimarama also abrogated the Fiji Constitution.⁶⁷ As with previous coups, the economy was significantly degraded, mainly due to a drop in tourism. Currently Bainimarama remains a military dictator in charge of a partly militarized government. For example, at the time of writing, the post of Fiji Commissioner of Police is held by Brigadier General Ioane Naivalarua of the RFMF. Although democratic elections have been promised in 2014, a positive outcome in this regard remains to be seen, particularly given that the

⁶⁶ Neal, D, (from interview with M, Green, Lower Hutt, 25 June 2011), 18 December 2012.

⁶⁷ "Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade," New Zealand Government, accessed 11 February 2011, www.mfat.govt.nz.

previous democratic elections promised in 2009, did not occur as planned.⁶⁸ Both Australia and New Zealand have severed all formal political and military ties with Fiji, and are unlikely to resume such engagement until significant democratic progress has occurred in Fiji.

2006 saw an all too familiar fall from grace from the RFMF. Once again, the RFMF, an instrument of governmental power, had chosen to overthrow a legitimately elected government. As with the previous coup of 2000, Bainimarama's coup of 2006 contains an element of mystery and has to be judged on its own merits, rather than being stereotyped as just another 'typical' Fiji coup. In particular, it is interesting that in 2006, Bainimarama cited democratic tenets as being key reasons justifying the coup. Bainimarama claimed that the objective of the 2006 coup was to achieve multi-racial governance, reduce corruption, and to improve governance. In many regards, Bainimarama has not been able to meet all of these goals. Despite Bainimarama claiming that the coup was a necessity in order to establish a legitimate democracy, his method of doing so was paradoxical. Governance imposed by military force has resulted in ostracism of Fiji from part of the international community due to contradiction in established human rights and democratic norms, such as Article 21 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.⁶⁹ Further degradation of basic human rights have occurred in Fiji since Bainimarama's 2006 coup. On 10 April 2009, Bainimarama announced the 'Public Emergency Regulation,' a policy which effectively curtailed freedom of assembly and freedom of speech, including controls over the Fiji media.⁷⁰ The Public Emergency

⁶⁸ McGhie, "Time for a New Tone to Pacific Negotiations on the Future of Fiji," *The Dominion Post*, October 4, 2010.

⁶⁹ "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," United Nations, accessed 17 October 2010, www.un.org.

⁷⁰ "Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade," New Zealand Government, accessed 19 February 2011, www.mfat.govt.nz.

Regulation also provides the Fiji Police and RFMF immunity from prosecution if they perform acts of violence in the best interests of maintaining public safety. Bainimarama also subsequently suspended the GCC. However, on the subject of human rights, it must be noted that Bainimarama has still managed to maintain a far better record than some other nations within the Asia-Pacific region.

As with previous coups, other actors have been accused of actively or passively supporting the events of 2006. It is a commonly held belief that the GCC and the Fiji Methodist Church played no part in the coup of 2006. However, some Indo-Fijians, including Chaudhry himself, have been accused of supporting Bainimarama, while the Fijian Catholic Church has also been implicated. Certainly Bainimarama's coup deviated markedly from the previous coups in regards to supporting, rather than opposing, the goals of the Indo-Fijian community. Of paramount importance however, is the fact that civil order and internal security within Fiji remain problematic. The RFMF once again broke the accepted convention of neutrality of the armed forces. Rather than being an instrument of national power, the RFMF remains the national power within Fiji. This breach of political neutrality and adherence to radical activity by the RFMF, will remain a significant problem that even given substantial reform, will take decades to correct.

Despite obvious professional and ethical breaches of international convention by a potentially radical RFMF, it must be remembered that the RFMF is not yet a failed organisation. The RFMF retains a comprehensive chain of command, and given a few alleged exceptions, has not often committed acts of atrocities or ill-discipline. The RFMF is experienced in international peace support operations and maintains a strong body of

disciplined soldiers. During the coup and mutiny of 2000 it was the RFMF who protected the government of Fiji and enhanced internal security and civil order. However, the actions of Bainimarama and the RFMF in 2006, still resulted in the ostracism of Fiji by Australia and New Zealand, and this factor in particular, has some far reaching consequences.

In the event of internal instability and civil disorder, a nation's police force is usually considered to be the organisation responsible for the restoration of civil order and security. In such a situation, the military should only be utilised in an internal security situation in a supporting role to the police. However, the Fiji Police Force has consistently proven to be incompetent, or unwilling to provide this level of support to the people and the government of Fiji. During the coup of 2000, the Fiji Police Force almost certainly supported the civil unrest, albeit possibly in a passive rather than active manner. The ineptitude of the Fiji Police Force not only exacerbates the continued issue of civil disorder within Fiji, but also encourages the RFMF to take on an internal security role. The Fiji Police Force requires to significantly enhance its level of capability in regards to providing an effective internal security function to support the government of Fiji. The Fiji Police Force would also likely require the establishment of a well-armed and highly trained counter terrorist organisation. Creation of such a unit would allow the Fiji Police Force to effectively respond to internal security issues, and would reduce the temptation for the RFMF to take internal security matters into their own hands.

Within Bainimarama's interim government, the RFMF has comprehensively penetrated Fiji's governmental bureaucracy. A number of senior RFMF officers have been elevated to powerful positions within the government, either at ministerial or permanent secretary

level. For example senior RFMF officers have been placed as Minister of Immigration, and (previously) Commissioner of Prisons. At the time of writing, Brigadier General Ioane Naivalarua of the RFMF is holding the post of Police Commissioner.

Despite the sometimes proud history of the RFMF, there have been isolated, but unacceptable acts of violence committed, particularly in recent years. In addition to the alleged torture and murder of captured CRWU soldiers during the mutiny of 2000, other allegations have gained notoriety in Fiji. Shortly after seizing power on 5 January 2007, it has been claimed that RFMF personnel, on orders from Bainimarama, illegally detained a civilian by the name of Mr Nimilote Verebasaga, at Queen Elizabeth Barracks in Suva. During Mr Verebasaga's period of detention it has been claimed that RFMF soldiers tortured and murdered this man.⁷¹ Human rights violations as claimed here represent potential unethical, and unacceptable breaches of conduct by the RFMF.

Following Bainimarama's coup of 2006, New Zealand quickly severed all formal ties with the regime. Although such a stance by New Zealand is seen as an understandable and necessary measure, it has resulted in far reaching consequences, particularly regarding the connection and affiliation between the military forces of these two nations. The RFMF has traditionally held a very close working relationship with the NZDF. As an organisation the RFMF was created with substantial New Zealand assistance during the Pacific Islands campaign of the Second World War. Since that period, the NZDF has retained very close ties with the RFMF, with many of the RFMF officers having been trained by the New Zealand Army. However there have been periods where this relationship has been disrupted during the past 25 years. As recently as 2005, the New Zealand Army conducted

⁷¹ Fraenkel; Firth; Lal, *The 2006 Military Takeover In Fiji; A Coup To End All Coups*, Canberra, The Australian University Press, 2009, 56.

an officer training course on behalf of the RFMF in Fiji, while a Defence Advisor of the NZDF remained in Suva until the coup of 2006.⁷²

Once military ties between Fiji and New Zealand had been terminated the professional and personal connection between respective personnel of the NZDF and the RFMF have been quickly eroded. Officers within the RFMF now attend a senior officer training courses in India, China and Malaysia where prior to the 2006 coup, many RFMF officers were trained by the NZDF and ADF. Affiliations and connections between members of the RFMF and the NZDF are quickly deteriorating, while it is with some mild alarm that the RFMF are now being trained by the military forces of some nations who do not strictly adhere to all democratic principals, or in some cases do not adhere to democracy at all. As a result of this factor, there is a degree of risk that the loss of connection between the RFMF and the NZDF may result in a more radical RFMF in the future, or at least, an RFMF that continues to see an intervention role in internal security as being 'normal'. Considering that the RFMF is the third largest military force within the South Pacific region, the future re-engagement of professional connection between the RFMF and the NZDF is very important.

⁷² Neal, D, (from personal experience), 17 December 2012.

CHAPTER 6

COMMODORE BAINIMARAMA'S VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF FIJI AND THE RFMF

When Bainimarama seized power in 2006, some analysts hoped that as with previous Fiji coups, some form of political normality would shortly resume, including an attempt to return to democracy. However, some six years later (at the time of writing), Bainimarama is still very much in control of an illegitimate government, and a nation that has grown increasingly isolated from New Zealand. The questions may be asked, *'what vision does Commodore Bainimarama have in mind regarding the future of Fiji and the RFMF?'* and *'what is his strategic endgame?'* In recent years, Bainimarama alongside other personnel in the Fiji Interim Government, has released a series of documents that detail his future vision for both Fiji and the RFMF. Although the various official documents that were released include fluctuating levels of detail and pragmatism, they do serve to provide indicators regarding the intended future that Bainimarama has for Fiji, and the RFMF. The information detailed in these documents also provides some valuable indicators regarding the capability and determination of Bainimarama and his government. The documents to be discussed as part of this Chapter include the following¹:

- a. 'Peoples Charter For Change, Peace & Progress,' (Fiji Interim Government, 2008).
- b. 'A Strategic Framework for Change,' (Commodore Bainimarama, 1 Jul 2009).
- c. 'Roadmap For Democracy And Sustainable Socio-Economic Development 2009-2014, A Better Fiji For All,' (Fiji Government, Ministry of National Planning, July 2009).

¹ Neal, D, (a copy of these documents are held by the author), 8 March 2013.

- d. 'Republic of Fiji Military Forces, Strategic Plan & Intent 2011,' (Commodore Bainimarama, 30 November 2010).
- e. 'Republic of Fiji Military Forces; Annual Corporate Plan 2011,' (Commodore Bainimarama, November 2010).
- f. 'Fiji Navy; Vision 2020 – A Transformed Navy,' (Republic of Fiji Military Forces, 2011).

The above documents provide some intent as to future Fiji strategy regarding international relations, and governmental reform. Some of the documents could even be loosely described as being part of a strategic legacy that Bainimarama intends to put into place prior to his eventual departure from office. This chapter will summarise and analyse these documents in order to provide insight into Bainimarama's strategic vision.

'Peoples Charter For Change, Peace & Progress' (Fiji Government, 2008).

The 'Peoples Charter For Change, Peace & Progress' was produced in 2008 and was authorised by Bainimarama and Archbishop Mataka (Co-Chair, National Council for Building a Better Fiji [NCBBF]). This document was initiated under the direction of Bainimarama's Interim Government, with the support of the President of Fiji, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau. This document was produced with contributing members of the NCBBF being drawn from all walks of Fiji society. The results were agreed to under representation of the Fiji population, and were subsequently recommended to the President for endorsement. The 'Peoples Charter For Change, Peace & Progress' can be described as an expression of intent that reflects the collective views held by a significant part of the Fiji population. The purpose of the Charter is as follows:

The overarching objective of the Peoples Charter is to rebuild Fiji into a non-racial, culturally vibrant and united, well-governed, truly democratic nation; a nation that seeks progress and prosperity through merit-based equality of opportunity and peace.²

The ‘Key Pillars’³ for rebuilding Fiji, as detailed in this document are:

Key Pillars for rebuilding Fiji

1. Ensuring sustainable democracy and good and just governance.
2. Developing a common national identity and building social cohesion.
3. Ensuring effective, enlightened and accountable leadership.
4. Enhancing public sector efficiency, performance effectiveness and service delivery.
5. Achieving higher economic growth while ensuring sustainability.
6. Making more land available for productive and social purposes.
7. Developing an integrated development structure at the divisional level.
8. Reducing poverty to a negligible level by 2015.
9. Making Fiji a knowledge-based society.
10. Improving health and service delivery.
11. Enhancing global integration and international relations.

The ‘Peoples Charter’ also contains a paragraph on how to end the ‘coup culture’, as part of Pillar 1, with key principles outlined as follows:

Ending The Coup Culture; 14 Key Principles⁴

1. Remove the political, economic and social conditions for coups and strengthen the sanctions against coups.
2. Build genuine national reconciliation through dialogue, forgiveness and appropriate conflict resolution mechanisms for groups and individuals affected by coups.
3. Redefine and clarify the role of the RFMF to ensure it is committed to defending the constitution.
4. Transform the role of public leadership.
5. The courts to be empowered to penalise including orders of dissolution of political parties that engage in activities that breach important values of the constitution.

²Fiji Government, “Peoples Charter For Change, Peace & Progress,” (Paper presented by the Fiji Government, Suva, 2008), i

³ Ibid, 9.

⁴ Ibid, 15.

6. Improve ethnic relations at the personal, communal, institutional and national levels.
7. Enlarge public accountability for national security.
8. Implement electoral reforms.
9. Strengthen the accountability and transparency of state institutions, the private sector and civil society organisations in particular to enhance their adherence to the rule of law.
10. Establish civic programmes to raise public awareness about the injustice and illegality of coups and issues of democracy and good governance.
11. Reform institutions and rehabilitate individuals and groups which are most prone to being implicated in coups such as ethno-nationalists and religious fundamentalists.
12. Ensure a separation between religion and state.
13. Facilitate greater public participation in all aspects of governance.
14. Those found guilty of treason or coup related offences by a court of law be prohibited from contesting elections for life.

Under analysis, this document; the ‘Peoples Charter for Change, Peace & Progress,’ contains some positive guidance and principles as to how to improve the levels of governance and standard of human rights in Fiji. It is positive to note the intention to improve governance and also to end the ‘Coup Culture’. The ‘Key Pillars for Rebuilding Fiji’ will be examined first, followed by an analysis of the principles regarding ‘Ending the Coup Culture’.

The ‘Key Pillars for Rebuilding Fiji’ provide a clear list of recommendations and reflect the intent of the Fiji population. Specifically, this intent includes the wish to return to democracy, achieve enhanced levels of governance, improve the economy, enhance the provision of health, education, and public service delivery, and to improve social and national cohesion.

While being clear and precise in intent, there are some substantial differences between the wish of the Fiji population, and what is actually occurring in Fiji regarding society and governance. For example, ‘Sustainable Democracy and Good and Just Governance’ is a

statement that has not been achieved by Bainimarama's Interim Government. However, this Pillar of the Peoples' Charter does have the benefit of including an amount of coherent detail that could be used as a means to achieve this goal (including recommendations on ending the 'Coup Culture').

The intent to enhance levels of leadership, public sector performance, economic growth and provision of public service delivery details a series of goals that have also not been achieved by Bainimarama. As Chapter 7 of this thesis indicates, the status of these performance indicators has degenerated since Bainimarama's seizure of power in 2006. Furthermore, the goal of 'Reducing Poverty to a Negligible Level by 2015' appears to be an unachievable intent based milestone, reinforced by a lack of detail regarding a means to achieve this end-state. Also, the comments regarding 'Ensuring sustainable democracy and good and just governance' appear hypocritical given the poor state of governance and levels of corruption that currently exist within Fiji. However, it must be noted that this document partly reflects the wish of the Fijian population, rather than solely being a product of Bainimarama and his interim government.

The intent to 'Enhance Global Integration and International Relations' is an interesting theme to come from representatives of the Fiji population. Here it could be assumed that the majority of the Fiji population have seen the degradation of both governance and the economy, since Fiji partially isolated itself from some western democratic nations in 2006. The reader may sense the wish of the Fiji population to return to the normality and relative prosperity of a Fiji devoid from problems associated with poor governance and security.

In a similar fashion to the goal to enhance international relations, the 2nd Pillar ('Developing a Common National Identity and Building Social Cohesion'), reflects the wish of the Fiji population to reduce the friction caused by racial tensions that exist between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians. However, while the intent to enhance social cohesion and national identity is discussed in this part of the document, some concerns regarding the reality of race relations are apparent. For example, under the provisions listed as part of 'Pillar 2' is included the direction to respect other cultures, races and religions. However, also listed was an inference that the 'i-taukei' (a term that translates as indigenous Fijian) should still hold a dominant position within Fiji society. While such sentiment may be understandable, it does not necessarily bode well for the future of race relations in Fiji.

Also of interest, under Pillar 1 of the Peoples Charter, is some detail on how to end the 'Coup Culture'. However at the outset, it cannot be forgotten that the key supporter of this document, Bainimarama, staged a coup in 2006, overthrowing a democratic government and appointing himself as Prime Minister. This aspect of the document is also generic in detailing principles as to how to end the 'Coup Culture' and improve governance and human rights however, there is little information outlined that details the ways and means required to link the principles listed, to desired future results. Within this segment of the document, it is positive to note the wish of the population to separate the church from the state (e.g. prevent political interference from the Methodist Church of Fiji). It is also positive to note the intent of Bainimarama to encourage racial reform and understanding between Indo-Fijians, and indigenous Fijians. This approach generically fits with Bainimarama's self-styled cosmopolitan approach to governance.

One facet of the ‘Peoples Charter’ raising some concerns is regarding the 3rd Principle (under ‘Ending the Coup Culture’); ‘Re-define and clarify the role of the RFMF to ensure it is committed to defending the constitution’. Given the fact that Bainimarama believed his 2006 coup to be legitimate, it is easy to gain a negative impression of this principle. Does Bainimarama infer that the RFMF should ‘defend the constitution’ or instead remain established as the ultimate ‘power-broker’ within RFMF politics. Given the previous actions of Bainimarama, it is easy to imagine the latter rather than the former. Also, within democratic nations, it is accepted that a nation’s military is there (in part) to ultimately support the democratically elected parliament. This paradigm is not to be confused with the militaristic concept that a nations’ military should serve the constitution rather than the government. Such an interpretation may serve to cause friction between the military and the government. Furthermore, the proposed requirement for the RFMF to ‘defend the constitution’ can easily be interpreted as, ‘the RFMF will support the government if the latter follows RFMF interpretation of the constitution.’ The RFMF must remain politically neutral at all times, and the Fiji Police (rather than the RFMF) should be the first instrument of national power to support the government and maintain civil order. The 3rd Principle under ‘Ending the Coup Culture’, if manipulated, could possibly result in cementing the RFMF as the ultimate enforcer of subjectively interpreted political will within Fiji. It is worthy of note that a key problem in Fiji actually centres on the threshold for military intervention. The pattern of coups in 1987, 2000 and 2006 would suggest that it is a fairly low threshold (although there may be some quite strong reasons behind those particular interventions). This potential outcome could be considered similar to Turkey’s Armed Forces, which under a similar worded constitution (the Turkish Armed Forces are the guarantors of Turkey’s constitution), effectively allows them to use force or coercion to achieve political objectives, potentially in opposition to the Turkish Government. This

factor is relevant given that this constitution is being drafted under the leadership of a military dictator. If such a principle was formally entwined within the new proposed Fiji Constitution, it could serve to extend rather than end the so-called 'Coup Culture'. A safer and more democratic variation could be one whereby every service person is obliged to swear allegiance, not to the constitution, but to parliament.

While being admirable in intent, the flaws reflected in the 'Key Pillars for Rebuilding Fiji' are reflected in the lack of a pragmatically detailed plan that would be required to link what is effectively, the intent of the Fiji population, with tangible and achievable results. However, what the 'Key Pillars for Rebuilding Fiji' do represent, is the ability of some selected members of the Fiji population to identify what is currently wrong with Fiji, and what they would like to achieve in the medium-term. What is missing is an explanation of how this should happen. Lastly, the question may also be asked:

'Did Bainimarama initiate this document as a means to assist him in gaining a greater degree of public support while having no real intent or commitment to achieve the milestones indicated in this document?'

The answer to this question could be both yes and no. Some may argue that Bainimarama displays the desire to eventually achieve a partly democratic and racially tolerant Fiji. However, conversely it must be remembered that Bainimarama has ultimately defied democratic conventions, and that Fiji has suffered as a result. Hence a balanced view of this argument may suggest that Bainimarama has utilised this document to gain some form of public support, while having no real intention to achieve all of the goals detailed within.

It is difficult to take this document seriously given the current circumstances in Fiji and the lack of detail provided. While the document is coherent, it contains some contradictions and it is hard to gain a conviction that there is a real commitment or plan to achieve the stated goals. It is also possible that the initiators of this document may have utilised it as a means of deliberate manipulation, in order to hide government inadequacies by providing a visionary document that may not be followed. It may also be justified to assume that this document was used it as a means to placate and shape the Fiji population towards their leader's intent. At worst, this document could further cement the RFMF as a politically biased power-broker within Fiji. Further insights into the Prime Minister's intentions may be seen in the following document.

'A Strategic Framework for Change', (Commodore Bainimarama, 1 July 2009)

The document details a speech provided by Bainimarama to his Cabinet, on 1 July 2009. It outlines an intention to enhance the level of governance and the state of the economy in Fiji. It also contains some specific and detailed information regarding the drafting of a new constitution, and planned future democratic elections. To be more specific, this document includes the following key statements:

- a. That a new Fiji Constitution shall be drafted, commencing in September 2012, with the final result being complete by September 2013.
- b. That democratic elections will be held within Fiji in September 2014.
- c. That the maintenance of law and order is important. As such, the Police Force shall be strengthened and the Penal Code shall be reviewed.⁵
- d. That the Fiji Interim Government is concerned regarding the state of the Fiji economy and that on-going efforts will continue in order to enhance economic growth.
- e. The Fiji Judiciary shall continue to be strengthened.

⁵ Commodore Bainimarama, "A Strategic Framework for Change," (speech presented to Fiji Government Cabinet, Suva, 1 Jul 2009), 3.

On a positive note, analysis of this document reveals a stated commitment by Bainimarama regarding the aim to conduct democratic elections in 2014. However, as a cautionary note, Bainimarama has in the past promised to hold democratic elections, only to later default on this promise, albeit this only occurred once and was the result of robust debate during a forum meeting. Due to the detailed and conservative time frames detailed within this document, the reader may perceive some credibility regarding the intent to hold democratic elections in Fiji, however only time will tell whether or not this goal will become a reality. Some recent developments within Fiji have provided some level of optimism in this regard. Voting machines have arrived in Fiji and voter registration is underway. The constitution is close to being complete with the final product likely to be promulgated in March 2013. From that point, an appointed Constituent Assembly will be announced and a ratified constitution will come into effect. It is then proposed that elections will occur on a September 2014 timetable.⁶ The timing of the election has been set in an effort to avoid the hurricane season and to synchronise with the school holidays, as schools may be utilised as polling stations.

Also of positive mention, is the intention of Bainimarama to enhance the Fiji Police Force, the economy, the Judiciary and the Penal Code. However, it is interesting to note that little usable detail is mentioned within this speech regarding the specifics on how and when these improvements will occur.

Also of interest, is the plan to draft a new constitution, starting in 2012, with the end result complete in 2013, approximately one year prior to the planned 2014 elections. Given the levels of poor governance and internal insecurity that have existed within Fiji in recent

⁶ Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote, various interviews held in Fiji with government officials, October 2012), 10 December 2012.

decades, it is logical to suggest that the Fiji Constitution could benefit from review. It is of concern that the ultimate authority regarding the drafting of the new proposed Fiji constitution is Bainimarama, himself being a military dictator who overthrew a democratic government via the use of armed force. While some would hope that a viable Fiji constitution would seek to follow the democratic tradition of forcing the RFMF towards a status of political neutrality, given the views of Bainimarama, this wish could be considered to be an unlikely consequence of the constitution. Bainimarama's proposed constitution may not be a democratically viable document. As such, should democracy return to Fiji in 2014, the nation (perhaps with help from the international community) may be well served in formally reviewing Bainimarama's legacy constitution.

In summary, the speech provided by Bainimarama, appears to be logical and does seem sincere. However, as with some other government level documents it tends to focus on intentions and aim, rather than relevant detail and planning. It is hard to be confident that Bainimarama's government has the knowledge, or the means to achieve all of what he says they will.

Of most concern is the fact that Bainimarama, being a military dictator, is (together with the Attorney-General) responsible for the drafting of a constitution. It is hard to believe that such a constitution will be genuinely legitimate and, it may serve to cement the RFMF as an enforcer of political will. However, at face value at least, Bainimarama has pledged the intent to hold a democratic general election in 2014, and should be commended for this aim. The next document examines Bainimarama's intent for the future of the RFMF.

‘Republic of Fiji Military Forces, Strategic Plan & Intent 2011,’ (Commodore Bainimarama, 30 November 2010)

The document is described as being a ‘Strategic Plan & Intent’. However, it is a brief and generic script that reflects a simple annual plan and a statement of the ethos and values held by the RFMF. It does contain some useful items of information, particularly regarding the current status of Fiji in regards to military strategy and international relations. Also of interest, is the analysis of information detailed in this document helps to provide some insight regarding the thought process of Bainimarama as a strategic commander. The document allows the reader an opportunity to attempt to gauge the authenticity, commitment, and competence of Bainimarama.

In one of Bainimarama’s opening statements, the following comments draw scrutiny:

The uncertainties of the future global security environment, the isolation by our traditional defence partners [New Zealand and Australia], our focus on internal security and governance of the nation have huge implications for us in terms of our role, policies, relationships, practices and capabilities.⁷

In this statement, Bainimarama is fairly specific in claiming that Fiji has been isolated by the ‘traditional defence partners’ of Australia and New Zealand. This statement is entirely correct as both Australia and New Zealand severed political and military ties with Fiji following the 2006 military coup. However, of concern is this statement hints at the requirement to reevaluate ‘relationships’ (note Commodore Bainimarama’s ‘Look North’ policy; a subject that will be discussed in Chapter 7). One can conclude that Bainimarama is significantly interested in continued active relationship building with other Asia-Pacific nations, including India and in particular, China.

⁷Commodore Bainimarama, “*Republic of Fiji Military Forces, Strategic Plan & Intent 2011,*” (a paper presented for the RFMF, Suva, 30 November 2010), 1.

Bainimarama's document progresses to state the following:

The 1997 White Paper had emphasised external threats in its analysis and advocated a defence posture that would provide for real deterrence and real combat capability in order to preserve national sovereignty on land and sea.

Here, the Fiji defence analysts have correctly identified that in the event of possible civil disorder in Fiji, the military forces of Australia or New Zealand may intervene. However, this possibility would probably only occur in an attempt to protect the safety of Australian and New Zealand nationals living in Fiji. Should an evacuation of foreign nationals occur, it would need to be clearly indicated to ensure that the RFMF do not perceive it as an intervention, a fact that may elicit an aggressive response. Such a stance by New Zealand was taken following the first coup of 1987, when the New Zealand Prime Minister ordered the NZDF to despatch a C-130 aircraft, laden with armed soldiers uninvited, to Fiji to safeguard New Zealand's interests. Fortunately common sense prevailed, and prevented a possible military disaster for New Zealand. At the time, the RFMF were suspicious of foreign intentions, and had defended Suva international airport with an Infantry Battalion in order to guard against such an eventuality. As an example illustrating the seriousness of the RFMF during this episode, a former officer of the RFMF stated 'if a New Zealand Aircraft [RNZAF] had landed at Suva, and an armed New Zealand soldier had walked off, we would have opened fire'⁸. If a foreign power ever inserted armed service personnel into Fiji without the invitation of the Fiji government, such an act would likely be viewed as a breach of sovereignty with the RFMF likely to respond accordingly. Even a potential Services Protected Evacuation (SPE) of New Zealand nationals would likely be considered as a breach of sovereignty by the RFMF.

⁸ Neal, D.J., (from discussions with Seruvakula, November 2002, and from Tonkin-Covell discussions with Seruvakula and other RFMF Officers, 2004-2006).

New Zealand and Australia gained a greater understanding of Fijian likely reactions post the events of 1987. However, Australia took a similar stance towards Fiji during the 2006 military coup. In this situation Australia despatched a number of warships into the region while also inserting a small team of SAS operatives into the country (uninvited). While the ADF was postured to conduct a possible SPE of Australian nationals from Fiji, as in New Zealand's response to the 1987 coup, such a move would almost certainly have met with active resistance from the RFMF. Recollections of conversations between Commander ADF and Commander RFMF in 2006 confirm tension at this point.⁹ Any foreign military force entering Fiji sovereign territory is warned to only do so under invite of the Fiji Government (and depending on the political climate, the RFMF) in order to mitigate the risk of widespread conflict that could escalate from a misinterpreted SPE. There is a relatively large number of regular and territorial force infantry soldiers stationed in Fiji. In times of tension the territorial forces are normally mobilised. There is approximately one regular force infantry battalion permanently based in Suva, with a further three territorial force infantry battalions on the island of Viti Levu. Given the complex terrain of Fiji (and in particular, Suva), any foreign military force would likely encounter significant complexity and resistance if ever daring to breach Fiji sovereignty. The RFMF continue to conduct planning to safeguard against the possible breach of Fiji sovereign territory from external threats. In regards to the requirement of Australia and New Zealand to plan for a possible SPE of respective nationals from Fiji, it must be remembered that in past situations involving civil disorder within Fiji, the loss of human life has been very low, particularly in regards to civilian casualties. While some people have been killed, casualties have mainly been restricted to those personnel actively involved with the key opposing stake holders. Therefore, if taken in a historical context,

⁹ Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote from interview with Commodore Bainimarama and Colonel Manueli, 2008), 10 December 2012.

potential future civil disorder within Fiji will not necessarily provide undue risk to resident foreign nationals.

Bainimarama expands on an earlier comment regarding the stance of traditional allies (Australia and New Zealand);

At the international level, our traditional friends [Australia and New Zealand] have deserted us. They do not want to understand us and only care about imposing their political ideologies and beliefs on us. God has been merciful and kind to us. New friends have come to our aid [China, India and Thailand]. We have transformed our Look North Policies, international relations, trade and economic relations, and defence partners. This has some implications for us now and into the future and we must appreciate this development and carry out the necessary transformation within.¹⁰

Here Bainimarama again emphasises the isolation of Fiji from the traditional partners of Australia and New Zealand. In their place, nations such as India, Thailand, Malaysia and especially China are filling the void that was once provided by New Zealand and Australia.

This paper details the role and ethos and values of the RFMF. This document also briefly mentions the theme of ‘change, progress, reform and transformation’ and provides direction regarding tasks to be conducted by the RFMF in 2011. A financial budget for 2011 is detailed and the document also attempts to explain an endgame for the RFMF, and a conclusion that directs all members of the RFMF to ‘abide by the spirit of this document’.

In summary, this paper is less than impressive and does not portray the RFMF, or Bainimarama, in a particularly positive light. Most of the document consisted of a

¹⁰Commodore Bainimarama, “*Republic of Fiji Military Forces, Strategic Plan & Intent 2011*,” (a paper presented for the RFMF, Suva, 30 November 2010), 5.

summary of the role of the RFMF and the ethos and values of the RFMF. While such sentiment is positive, it could have been published in a separate document. The over-reliance on ethos, values and roles that the RFMF fulfils, had the effect of making the document seem unsophisticated. The document briefly spoke of transformation and progress but didn't explain how or when this would occur. While providing some level of direction and intent, the document appeared to illustrate the RFMF as a military force without a detailed plan and resources. Of value was a firm indicator regarding the intent of the RFMF to take any external threats to Fiji sovereignty seriously, and the detailed list of audit tasks directed for the RFMF. Also of value was the reinforced message that New Zealand and Australia had deserted Fiji, and that Fiji should 'Look North' towards the more significant Asian powers for assistance and partnerships. Lastly, of interest is the task provided to the Fiji Navy to 'initiate discussion for a new Naval Base.' The concept will be discussed later in this chapter. Overall, the document is a very broad intent based paper that serves little purpose aside from detailing a relatively mundane list of RFMF internal audit and procedural tasks. In summary, it could be stated that this document illustrates an RFMF that lacks a coherent plan and resources. The following paper details Bainimarama's plan for the RFMF during the calendar year 2011.

'Republic of Fiji Military Forces; Annual Corporate Plan 2011,' (Commodore Bainimarama, November 2010).¹¹

The RFMF 'Annual Corporate Plan' for 2011 is not dissimilar in design to the aforementioned 'RFMF Strategic Plan and Intent 2011'. However, where the 'Annual Corporate Plan' differs from the 'Strategic Plan and Intent 2011,' is the focus on short-term

¹¹ Commodore Bainimarama, "Republic of Fiji Military Forces; Annual Corporate Plan 2011," (paper presented for the RFMF, Suva, Fiji, November 2010).

compliance and internal outputs for the calendar year 2011. Rather than making any attempt to focus on long-term goals, Bainimarama is clearly making an effort to focus on the development of concepts and doctrine to help provide the RFMF with a solid base from which to later develop. It is pleasing to note that some attempt is made to link some of the intents listed within the ‘Peoples Charter for Change, Peace & Progress,’ with potential results detailed within this document.

However, the document, much like the ‘Strategic Plan and Intent 2011’ is also fairly brief and generic, with the focus of confirming the RFMF organisational structure, vision, intent, budget and internal tasks regarding the development of doctrine and concepts. The 2011 budget was listed as \$108 million (Fiji Dollars). The RFMF organisational structure is also confirmed. Also mentioned is a significant but repetitive entry made by Bainimarama regarding a repeat of the isolation of Fiji by ‘traditional friends’ and emphasising that ‘new friends have come to our aid (Look North Policy)’.¹² Here Bainimarama refers to his policy of engagement with India and China as his strategic approach to alliances, and his stance towards broader Asia-Pacific engagement as part of his international relations strategy. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this stance adopted by Bainimarama under the ‘Look North’ policy has some far reaching and potentially negative consequences for New Zealand.

It is difficult to take all aspects of the ‘Annual Corporate Plan 2011’ seriously. Although some key outputs and timelines have been mentioned, by and large the key performance indicators were highly generic and specific outputs seemed un-realistic. For example, one of the key 2011 outputs was listed as ‘Implement Principle 1’ of ending the coup culture

¹² Commodore Bainimarama, “*Republic of Fiji Military Forces, Strategic Plan & Intent 2011*,” (a paper presented for the RFMF, Suva, 30 November 2010), 4.

(remove the political, economic and social conditions for coups and strengthen the sanctions against coups).¹³ Some two years after this document has been produced (at the time of writing) the ‘political, economic and social conditions for coups’ have not been removed. Indeed during 2011, some senior personnel within the RFMF were in open opposition of Bainimarama, as the actions of Lieutenant Colonel Tevita Mara (CO 3 FIR) of the RFMF helped to illustrate. This opposition may have also included support from Brigadier Pita Driti (RFMF Land Commander) and possibly one other Brigadier.¹⁴ Therefore, it could be stated that Fiji is still at risk of further internal insecurity involving elements of the RFMF. Given that the current Fiji Interim Government was installed via a military coup, it is difficult to take the output ‘strengthen the sanctions against coups’ seriously.

In summary, the ‘Annual Corporate Plan’ is a generic and simplistic document. While some of the outputs seem logical, the ways and means to achieve these outputs seem vague, unrealistic, or in some cases, have not been achieved. On a positive note, the reader can see a link between the intent of the ‘Peoples Charter for Change Peace and Progress’ with this document. However, the ‘Annual Corporate Plan’ indicates that while Bainimarama may be a charismatic leader with some sound ideas, he lacks the commitment, resources or real intent to achieve many of the outputs listed. As with the ‘Strategic Plan & Intent’, this document does not serve to portray either Bainimarama or the RFMF in a particularly positive light. The next segment of this chapter will discuss the proposed development of democracy and socio-economic development within Fiji.

¹³ Commodore Bainimarama, “*Republic of Fiji Military Forces, Strategic Plan & Intent 2011*,” (a paper presented for the RFMF, Suva, 30 November 2010), 19.

¹⁴ Tonkin-Covell, (from interviews with various RFMF officers, 2012, [direct quote]), 9 March 2013.

‘Roadmap For Democracy And Sustainable Socio-Economic Development 2009-2014,

A Better Fiji For All,’ (Fiji Government, Ministry of National Planning, July

2009)

This is a coherent and specific document produced by the Fiji Interim Government’s Ministry of National Planning. The document expands on some of the broad methods and principles mentioned in the ‘Peoples Charter for Change, Peace and Progress’ as a method to enhance governance and economic development within Fiji. What this document attempts to do is to link many of the generic statements made in the Peoples Charter, to more tangible and specific outcomes to be achieved by the Fiji Government. The reference begins by identifying the problem regarding deteriorating governance, civil-disorder, a failing economy, and the cycle of coups. Evidence is provided from Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index, listing the level of governance within Fiji to be at a poor level, with Fiji ranking well below Samoa, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Tuvalu and American Samoa in most of the governance indicators vetted by Transparency International.¹⁵ The document also mentions standards of governance as set by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.¹⁶ It is pleasing to see that the Fiji Interim Government is attempting to validate the current standard of governance within Fiji via a method of measuring against recognised international standards.

¹⁵ Fiji Government, “*Roadmap For Democracy And Sustainable Socio-Economic Development 2009-2014, A Better Fiji For All,*” (a paper presented by the Fiji Government, Ministry of National Planning, Suva, July 2009), 6.

¹⁶ Ibid, 5.

The reference progresses to state the intent and requirement to adopt a new constitution, including the following general amendments;¹⁷

- a. Adoption of an Open List Proportional Representation electoral and voting system.
- b. Adoption of the common name ‘Fijian’ for all citizens and to change the official name of the country to ‘Fiji’.
- c. Provision that no coup can abrogate the Constitution.
- d. Enhancing and clarifying the role of the military and the country’s national security framework.
- e. Stronger protections for the application of the Bill of Rights such as adoption of International framework (CEDAW) definitions for discrimination against women and children.
- f. Proposals to strengthen the operation of state services and the accountability framework.

The above mentioned script contains some positive comments regarding proposed amendments for the new constitution. The statement ‘Enhancing and clarifying the role of the military and the country’s national security framework’ is both logical and potentially positive, as long as the role of the RFMF can be brought into line with internationally accepted democratic principles. However, the direction that ‘no coup can abrogate the constitution’ presents somewhat of a paradox given that the current Fiji Interim Government was installed via a military coup and have already abrogated the previous Fiji Constitution. Therefore, as with many other statements made by the Fiji Interim Government that advocate for positive democratic reform, there exists an inherent lack of credibility.

The reference then progresses to propose changes to the Fiji Electoral and Parliamentary System.¹⁸ Specifically, the communal voting and representation system and the alternative

¹⁷ Fiji Government, “*Roadmap For Democracy And Sustainable Socio-Economic Development 2009-2014, A Better Fiji For All,*” (a paper presented by the Fiji Government, Ministry of National Planning, Suva, July 2009), 6.

voting system, as set out under the 1997 Fiji Constitution, are criticised as flawed and will require to be reformed under the new proposed constitution. Exactly what the new electoral and parliamentary system will look like in the future was not detailed. However, it was stated that the future voting system should be simpler, inclusive and with a lower voting age. It is a positive theme of this chapter that the Fiji Interim Government is planning to put measures in place to enhance the validity of the planned Fiji general election in 2014.

The reference then makes specific mention of internal security and the RFMF, and provides the following interpretation of the future role of the RFMF:

The RFMF is primarily responsible for defence and plays a supportive role to the Police on internal security.¹⁹

Further elaboration regarding the future role of the RFMF is illustrated by the following statements:

Realigning the role of the military to place greater emphasis on the concept of human security to facilitate greater involvement by the RFMF in providing for basic needs and improving its relationship with the people.²⁰

The composition and role of the Fiji Military Forces as a hard security institution will remain the same given the very real potential for disruptive politics leading to conflict and instability. However, this role will be redefined under the national security framework and expanded along the human security paradigm. Formal measures will also be put in place to ensure:

- a. The Police remain the primary law and order institution and the point at which the military can intervene is clarified;

¹⁸Fiji Government, *Roadmap For Democracy And Sustainable Socio-Economic Development 2009-2014, A Better Fiji For All*, (a paper presented by the Fiji Government, Ministry of National Planning, Suva, July 2009). 7.

¹⁹Ibid, 9.

²⁰ Ibid, 10.

- b. There is provision for the clear accountability of the military to civilian governments through a redefined relationship; and
- c. The military remains politically neutral at all times.

...Subject to formal adoption of these recommendations, a plan of action will be developed to facilitate implementation from 2010 onwards particularly in relation to the incorporation of a human security framework into the operations of the RFMF.

The reference also contains mention of the policy objectives and key performance indicators regarding the ability to meet future national security requirements including;²¹

- a. A new legal security framework by 2012.
- b. Establishing a National Security Council by 2012.
- c. An Operational framework for investigating all terrorist activities within Fiji by 2014.
- d. Adoption of a new legal framework clarifying the relationship between the military and civilian Governments.
- e. The adoption of a Constitutional framework setting out the role of the RFMF by 2012.
- f. Adoption of a Human Security Framework for the RFMF by 2011.
- g. Annual increase in minority composition within the RFMF from 2010 to 2014.
- h. Ending the cycle of coups.

It is pleasing to see this document attempting to link the generic principles of the Peoples' Charter with more specific goals. Incorporation of greater numbers of minority groups within the RFMF is also seen as a positive initiative, as is the direction that the RFMF provides a supporting role to the police in regards to internal security matters. Some of the statements made do create some requirement for caution. For example, it is elementary for the Fiji Interim Government to state that the Fiji Police Force should be the first instrument of national power to deal with any potential internal security issues. However, it is hard to believe that the RFMF would allow the Fiji Police Force to control the any

²¹Fiji Government, "Roadmap For Democracy And Sustainable Socio-Economic Development 2009-2014, A Better Fiji For All," (a paper presented by the Fiji Government, Ministry of National Planning, Suva, July 2009), 32-33.

internal security issues. It is also obvious that, should elements of the RFMF actually instigate another coup, the Fiji Police Force is not of sufficient strength and capability to actively deal with such an eventuality.

The concept of the RFMF supporting the requirement for 'human security' under a legal framework is honourable in intent. However, this proposed concept of 'human security' should follow the softer paradigm of directing the RFMF towards a greater integration with and support provided to, the Fiji population. Care should be taken to prevent the possibility that such a 'human security' concept is manipulated towards a potentially harder paradigm. If the proposed human security legal framework was not sufficiently robust, it could serve to be manipulated towards internal security rather than human security. As such, the legalisation of such a specific framework may serve to reinforce the RFMF as the ultimate power broker within Fiji politics. Under the guise of providing human security, the RFMF may potentially legally, rise from being a supporting power to the Fiji Police Force during a period of internal instability, to being a power answerable to no-one.

Regarding the proposed future role of the RFMF in Fiji, while the intent of this document appears to be honourable, there exists the requirement for a degree of caution. Given the dominant position of the RFMF within the Fiji Interim Government, and the physical dominance of the RFMF during periods of internal disorder, it is hard to believe that the current government, or the RFMF, will allow the military to completely disengage from politics or internal security roles.

While this document does contain some potentially sceptical statements and goals, it does appear to be a reasonably coherent and pragmatic guideline that may enhance the level of governance and security within Fiji. Some of the policy objectives, particularly those regarding the reform of the RFMF and adoption of a new national security framework are positive. It was pleasing to note the stated intent that the RFMF should become politically neutral, and that the Fiji Police Force should be the first instrument of national power to respond to any internal security issues. Many of the key performance indicators listed had timeframes not yet surpassed at the time of writing, so it is difficult to fully gauge the credibility of this document. The next document studied as part of this chapter involves Bainimarama's view of the future of the RFMF (Navy).

Vision 2020 – A Transformed Navy²²

This document was released by the RFMF (Navy) in February 2011 however, the structure of the content within originated under certain direction from Bainimarama. 'Vision 2020 – A Transformed Navy' is a visionary document that proposes radical changes to the RFMF (Navy) in the medium term. 'Vision 2020 – A Transformed Navy' will be Bainimarama's legacy to the RFMF. Within the forward to this document, the RFMF (Navy) make it clear that they wish to shift from a continental style of defence towards a maritime defence concept as part of a wider, whole of government approach. The forward section of the document states that the focus on maritime security is vital due to Fiji being an island nation, positioned at a strategic location in the South Pacific and consisting of an EEZ area much larger than its land size. The document emphasises the importance to Fiji of maritime security, by describing the porous maritime border and the requirement to

²²RFMF, "Vision 2020 – A Transformed Navy," (paper produced for the RFMF, Suva, February 2011).

focus on resource security and combating trans-national crime. The document is specific, easy to read and examines Fiji maritime strategy for the next decade with the end-state being a transformed Navy by 2020.

Themes

‘Vision 2020 – A Transformed Navy’ lists six key ‘themes’ as a means of explaining the proposed strategies; these themes are:

1. Changing World of Trade and Economic Activities.
2. The Changing World of Global Security and Border Protection.
3. New Forms of Technological Support, Information Gathering and Communication.
4. Infrastructure Design and Improvements.
5. The Changing Nature of The Workforce.
6. Finance.²³

Theme 1: Changing World of Trade and Economic Activities

This segment of the document emphasises the economic changes brought about through globalization, and identifies that China and India will be regional key players in the future. The chapter progresses to state that given Fiji’s exclusion from the Commonwealth and Pacific Island Forum, the emphasis on economic activity in Fiji should focus on India and China rather than Commonwealth, and South Pacific trading partners. An explanation is also provided regarding the importance of maritime trade to Fiji, which makes up over 80% of Fiji’s total import and export volume.²⁴ Analysis of Theme 1 is not surprising and indeed indicates some sound strategic foresight on the part of Bainimarama. Given Fiji’s economic activity, strategic geographic placement within the South Pacific, large EEZ,

²³ RFMF, “*Vision 2020 – A Transformed Navy*,” (paper produced for the RFMF, Suva, February 2011),8.

²⁴ Ibid, 9.

porous maritime border, and numerous smaller islands that make up its sovereign territory, the government of Fiji would indeed be wise to focus the RFMF on the importance of maritime rather than continental security. However, again the future effect of Bainimarama's 'Look North Policy' is seen, where he is proposing the exclusion of traditional economic partners within the South Pacific in favour of the rising powers of India and China. This intent by Bainimarama may be considered to be both strategic in thinking and practical in application. However, as will be discussed in Chapter 7, the strategic implication of Bainimarama's 'Look North Policy' has potential serious strategic consequences for both New Zealand and Fiji.

Theme 2: The Changing World Of Global Security And Border Protection

This theme emphasises the threats posed by trans-national crime (Fiji's poor international standing on human trafficking is mentioned), threats posed by rising sea level / global warming, bio-security and support to international search and rescue (SAR) commitments. This segment of the document is both clear and logical. It is pleasing the document lists risks posed by trans-national crime (particularly human trafficking) and the challenge of attempting to police a large and porous maritime border. Theme 2 indicates that the current state of the RFMF (Navy) is of insufficient capability to cope with the task of maritime border protection and in combating the threat posed by trans-national crime. This chapter is summarised by emphasising the requirement to adopt a whole of government approach to meet future threats.²⁵

²⁵RFMF, "*Vision 2020 – A Transformed Navy*," (paper produced for the RFMF, Suva, February 2011), 11.

Theme 2 then details the limited infrastructure offered by the current Naval base in Suva, and proposes to seriously investigate the option of building a new and more comprehensive naval base in Fiji (one of the likely locations could be within Suva harbour however, on the opposite side of the bay from Suva itself). The document details the poor state of fleet logistics and maintains that vessel maintenance and fleet management needs to be enhanced. Threats posed by maritime pollution, terrorism, and maritime law enforcement are also investigated. One of the closing comments identifies the requirement for the Fiji Government to monitor all of the above listed challenges, and that this can only be achieved via the RFMF (Navy) adopting a whole of government approach to maritime security that would encompass a full spectrum of maritime tasks.²⁶ Finally, the document details the requirement for Fiji to consolidate all of the various legislative maritime acts under a ‘Navy Act’. The proposed ‘Navy Act’ would encompass the following key responsibilities:

Navy Act

- Trans-national Crime.
- Terrorism.
- Customs.
- Bio-security.
- Immigration.
- Illegal Migration.
- Fisheries.
- Marine Safety.
- Maritime Pollution.

²⁶ RFMF, “*Vision 2020 – A Transformed Navy*,” (paper produced for the RFMF, Suva, February 2011), 15.

The proposed Navy Act seeks to enhance and simplify the powers of the RFMF (Navy) into a force capable of conducting a full spectrum of maritime operations including military, diplomatic and constabulary. The Navy Act seeks to move all aspects of national maritime responsibility from existing governmental departments and elements of national power, to that of the RFMF (Navy). However, as with earlier comments regarding the proposed future role of the RFMF under Bainimarama, the Navy Act may serve to further blur the line that separates the military from government and police (in this case maritime coast guard). The proposed Navy Act may serve to establish an element of the RFMF into a power unto itself, rather than an instrument of national power. Given the recent history of the RFMF, the proposed Navy Act poses some risks to the democratic future of Fiji.

Theme 3: New Forms of Technological Support, Information Gathering and Communications

This theme focuses on the requirement to embrace technological advances, in order to police Fiji's porous maritime border, compete with potential adversary's, and interact at international and national level in regards to Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), and SAR operations. The proposed technological advances include adoption of a radar operated Automatic Identification System and Vessel Traffic System to police Fiji's maritime border. This will assist the Navy in achieving enhanced Maritime Domain Awareness.²⁷ This system will be incorporated under a Coastal Radar Surveillance System that will allow for the monitoring of maritime traffic within Fiji's EEZ. The proposed Coastal Radar Surveillance System will consolidate all forms of maritime surveillance and security including customs, resource security and military security. Lastly, the theme

²⁷ RFMF, "Vision 2020 – A Transformed Navy," (paper produced for the RFMF, Suva, February 2011), 17.

summarised by this segment of the document emphasises the requirement for the Navy to enhance its communication networks including, adoption of tertiary – mobile SATCOM, new HF, VHF and UHF communications. The importance of maritime awareness and the current poor state of this capability have been correctly identified. However, whether or not Fiji has the financial resources available to fund this type of capability development is questionable. Furthermore, if Fiji is not in a position to fund this development, from what possible source could Fiji seek to gain assistance from? It is here that Bainimarama’s ‘Look North Policy’ may be the only viable answer to address this financial problem.

Theme 4: Infrastructure Design and Improvements

This theme lists the current Fiji RFMF (Navy) fleet assets and emphasises the limited capability of the force. Key naval platforms are listed as follows:²⁸

²⁸ I RFMF, “*Vision 2020 – A Transformed Navy*,” (paper produced for the RFMF, Suva, February 2011), 21.

RFMF Key Naval Capability Platforms

Name	Years of Svc	Speed	Endurance	Sensors / Weapons
Levuka	24+	12	1200 NM	-Navigation Communication. -1 x 12.7 mm MG.
Lautoka	23+	10	1200 NM	-Navigation Communication. -1 x 12.7 mm MG.
Kula	17	15	2200 NM	-Navigation Communication. -2 x 12.7 mm MG. -1 x 20 mm MG. ²⁹
Kikau	17	15	2200 NM	-Navigation Communication. -2 x 12.7 mm MG. -1 x 20 mm MG.
Kiro	17	16	2200 NM	-Navigation Communication. -2 x 12.7 mm MG. -1 x 20 mm MG.

This theme emphasises the current limited naval assets held by the RFMF. Of particular note is the aging nature of the naval fleet, and its inability to meet all national requirements of maritime security.

Theme 5: The Changing Nature Of The Workforce

This theme emphasises the requirement for the RFMF (Navy) to recruit technologically adept civilians holding relevant tertiary qualifications. Focus will be provided on recruitment and retention of highly qualified officers and sailors. A comprehensive

²⁹ The Kula includes a mounting system for a 30 mm Oerlikon automatic weapon system. However, this weapon system is not normally mounted on the vessel as a standard armament.

personnel training and career management model has also been adopted to help support training and career development of RFMF (Navy) personnel.

Theme 6: Finance

As with the remainder of the RFMF, the Navy is plagued by a lack of finance to support operational expenses and capital expenditure. The paper points out the dilution of the Navy budget due to a perceived lack of understanding of maritime operations by the remainder of the RFMF. The issue regarding the fact that the maritime component of the budget is represented by an army representative rather than a navy representative is also addressed. Here the chapter hints that the Navy is disadvantaged by coming under fiscal control of the RFMF.³⁰

‘Vision 2020 – A Transformed Navy’, then progresses its argument to state the immediate requirement to establish:

- a. A Navy Act.
- b. A new Navy base.
- c. A transformed Navy.

Command and Control; ‘Navy Act’

Currently, the RFMF (Navy) comes under direct command and control of the RFMF. In turn, the RFMF comes under direct command and control of the Ministry of Defence. The paper proposes that the RFMF (Navy) should be established as an independent force under

³⁰ RFMF, “*Vision 2020 – A Transformed Navy*,” (paper produced for the RFMF, Suva, February 2011), 25.

direct command of the Ministry of Defence, and not the RFMF. Together with a modified command and control system, and the proposed Navy Act, the navy would be responsible to the Ministry of Defence for all facets of maritime security, surveillance, constabulary, military, resource, and customs duties. While Bainimarama's strategy has some merit particularly from a maritime focus, the risk is the navy may become a law unto itself and an integrated part of the Fiji Government, rather than being an instrument of national power subservient to the government. This factor poses a significant risk to future democratic progress within Fiji.

Navy Fleet Enhancement.

The paper proposes to enhance the RFMF (Navy) personnel allocation from approximately 350 (2012) to 700 (by 2020). The paper also proposes to improve the RFMF (Navy) with the following acquisitions³¹:

³¹ RFMF, "*Vision 2020 – A Transformed Navy,*" (paper produced for the RFMF, Suva, February 2011), 26.

Proposed RFMF Key Naval Platform Acquisitions

	Fleet in Being	Fleet 2015	Fleet 2020
Inshore Fleet	2 x L Class	2 x IPV	5 x IPV 1 x LCT
Offshore Fleet	3 x PPB	3 x PPB 1 x OPV 1 x MRV	3 x OPV 1 x MRV
Air Component	NIL	1 x HELO	1 x MPA 1 x HELO

While the above proposal represents a sound capability basis from which to expand Fiji’s ability to meet a full spectrum of future maritime security requirements, it does raise a number of questions. Firstly, is it practical and realistic to hope to effectively double the size of the RFMF (Navy) within 10 years? And secondly, from where would the resources required to fund and support this activity be drawn from? At the time of writing Bainimarama’s proposed timetable has now fallen behind schedule, with some of the stated goals now being a matter of intentions to be achieved over a longer period of time.³²

Summary of ‘Vision 2020 – A Transformed Navy’

‘Vision 2020’ is a strategic document that correctly recognises and addresses key issues regarding the current degraded state of the RFMF (Navy), its inability to secure Fiji’s porous maritime border, and the importance of the Navy over the RFMF within the contemporary operating environment. However, while it is easy to point out what new

³² Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote), 10 December 2012.

facilities and infrastructure developments the navy wishes to achieve, the paper is very generic in stating how such developments would be funded. Given that the significant proposed modifications would come with a significant price tag, it is easy to state that the Fiji Government would struggle to fund such an enterprise. In this regard, Fiji would likely have to seek overseas assistance from other Asia-Pacific nations (e.g. China?) to support the stated capability enhancement. Certainly, Fiji's links with the rising Asian powers were emphasised earlier in the document. Such a possible future move could serve to further distance Fiji and its military from previous traditional defence partners such as Australia and New Zealand, and further cement ties with non-democratic nations such as China. Given the current military tensions that exist within the greater Asia-Pacific region, such a move may be considered to be a particularly unsavoury development by some security analysts.

The document emphasises the importance of the Navy as the primary arm of the RFMF within the contemporary operating environment. However, the proposed Navy Act could serve to further strengthen the role of the RFMF within the Fiji Government and could reinforce the maritime element of the Fiji military as a power unto themselves, rather than being an instrument of national power, subservient to the Fiji Government. This concept poses a significant risk to the future of democracy within Fiji should it come to fruition. However, current sources in Fiji indicate that the proposed Navy Act is struggling to gain support and has made little progress to date.³³

As with many other documents produced by Bainimarama, 'Vision 2020 – A Transformed Navy' is clear and coherent. However, this document lacks credibility, for while it does

³³ Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote), 8 March 2013.

provide a strategic intent, it does not provide a detailed plan or resources, specifying how to achieve the intent. Given the current state of the RFMF, and resources available to the Fiji Interim Government, it is difficult to take this document seriously.

As a ‘post script comment’ (dated September 2012) regarding ‘Vision 2020 – A Transformed Navy’, it is apparent that the vision of Bainimarama to transform the RFMF (Navy) has fallen well behind schedule. The planned refurbishment of existing naval vessels has stalled due to resource shortfalls and a lack of skilled engineers being available. A number of Bainimarama’s planned fleet acquisitions and the establishment of the proposed new Naval Base at Suva look optimistic at this point in time. If the modernisation and expansion of the RFMF (Navy) does actually occur, a more feasible time-frame would likely be closer to 2030 rather than 2020. The practicality and validity of the proposed Navy Act has also been questioned and subsequently postponed for further review post the planned general elections in 2014. Many members of the RFMF and the Fiji Interim Government are questioning the wisdom in separating the Navy from the RFMF and giving it a degree of autonomous power. Lastly, any potential application to China to source additional financial support for the RFMF is being reassessed due to possible future interest rate rises on a potential financial aid package that might be provided from China to Fiji.³⁴

The series of documents analysed in this chapter offer an interesting snap-shot regarding the competence, intent and pragmatism of Bainimarama and his government. The ‘Peoples Charter for Change Peace and Progress’ reflected the strong will of the Fiji population to return to democracy, enhance governance and the economy, and to re-

³⁴ Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote), 8 March 2013.

integrate with the international community. Consequently, the ‘Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socio-Economic Development 2009-2014, A Better Fiji for All,’ linked many of the intents of the Fiji population to tangible outcomes in the future, including enhancing the constitution and promising to hold democratic elections in 2014. However, while the intent to enhance governance and return to democracy is pleasing to note, it is hard to believe that Bainimarama and the Fiji Interim Government will have the enthusiasm or maturity to allow the RFMF to be completely isolated from politics and internal security without receiving substantial international support or pressure. These two documents are clear and coherent. In respect to the latter document, some relevant detail was included. However, it was difficult to take the pledge of democratic reform seriously given the current status of the Fiji Interim Government, and it was also alarming to note that Bainimarama is effectively responsible for drafting the future constitution. Furthermore, Bainimarama may have utilised and manipulated both documents to help him to gain a degree of public support while being able to shape the future government to his intent. However, at least these two documents were logically linked, and did indicate some willingness to hold democratic elections in 2014.

The latter three documents focussed on outlining the future of the RFMF. The documents were simple and concise summaries, detailing Bainimarama’s intent for the RFMF. In particular, ‘Vision 2020 – A Transformed Navy’ detailed a significant capability enhancement plan for the RFMF (Navy). However, the shortcomings of these documents are not in the intent, rather in the lack of detailed planning or resource allocation inherent within each document. Most documents contained very generic outcomes and end-states. In many cases, particularly regarding the last document analysed, (‘Vision 2020 – A Transformed Navy’) the vision detailed appeared to be well outside of the resources of the

RFMF and the Fiji Interim Government. Therefore, it was hard to take these documents seriously, a fact that does not bode well regarding the future capability of the RFMF.

What was of particular concern regarding all three of the above mentioned documents, was the perceived potential shaping of the future RFMF into an organisation that may retain an element of political power and governmental influence into the future. In this regard, Bainimarama is carefully crafting a legacy that while being partly unachievable, may cause to provide some future threat towards democratic progress within Fiji. Lastly, should Bainimarama truly wish to enhance the capability of the RFMF (Navy), he will have to do so with external resources. In this case China and the other Asian powers could be possible means of support. Although this scenario may seem unlikely at this point in time, if it did eventuate it would serve to significantly alter the security dynamics with the South Pacific region.

In some cases, the strategies outlined by Bainimarama showed some attempt to link the intent of the population, as detailed in the ‘Peoples Charter for Change, Peace and Progress,’ with his vision. However, the key factors preventing this potential democratic progress are presented by Bainimarama and the RFMF. Although Bainimarama may be following some of the intent of the population, it is assessed that his legacy upon the RFMF may be democratically unviable. Furthermore, many of the proposed aspects of Bainimarama’s political and military legacy should be viewed with caution, as a threat to future democratic progress within Fiji.

Overall, the documents analysed indicated that the Fiji population wish to return to democracy, and build a prosperous and cosmopolitan society. However, Bainimarama also

arguably appears to have a strategy for retaining a strong and influential RFMF while he also displays a desire to align the future Fiji with the larger Asian powers at the expense of the relationship with New Zealand and Australia. If this is Bainimarama's desired endgame then it may markedly change the tone of international relations and strategy within the South Pacific region, as the next chapter will analyse.

Lastly, a brief series of discussion points must be raised regarding the subject of Bainimarama's legacy and future vision for both Fiji and the RFMF. Should the democratic general elections successfully occur within Fiji as proposed in September 2014, the future of Bainimarama is an unknown factor. Should Bainimarama not remain a part of the RFMF or Fiji Government post September 2014, then a number of possibilities exist regarding his proposed legacy and vision for Fiji and the RFMF. Bainimarama's 2013 Constitution may remain intact, or it may be reviewed under the new government. The newly elected government may also choose to produce a contemporary Defence White Paper that may drastically alter Bainimarama's proposed vision for the RFMF. The future of Bainimarama as a person of future influence within Fiji is an unknown factor. Furthermore, the future of Fiji and the RFMF post September 2014 is also a matter of debate and poses a number of questions that will be raised in the conclusion to the thesis.

CHAPTER 7

THE ISOLATION OF FIJI AND DEGREDDATION OF GOVERNANCE: SOME RISKS AND POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES

New Zealand and Fiji have historically maintained a close relationship. The relationship has been particularly strong in regards to the maintenance of cultural links between the two nations, a fact that is partly due to the large population of Pacific Islanders, including many Fijian's that reside in New Zealand. During New Zealand's most recent (2006) census, it was found that 37,746 Fijian's were permanent residents, making Fijians the second largest Pacific group residing in New Zealand behind ethnic Samoans.¹ A strong military connection maintained between Fiji and New Zealand since the Second World War has also been instrumental in maintaining an affiliation between the two nations. However, since the first coup in Fiji, this close relationship has become increasingly tenuous, particularly at the governmental level. Following the latest coup staged by the RFMF in December 2006, the New Zealand (and Australian) governments were decisive in severing formal political and military ties with Fiji.² Due to the lack of democratic progress seen to occur in recent years under the Fiji Interim Government, the political alienation of Fiji by New Zealand is unlikely to change prior to significant democratic reforms actually materialising within Fiji.

With Fiji becoming increasingly isolated from New Zealand, Bainimarama has looked to many Asian nations for support and affiliation. If Bainimarama's endgame includes Fiji being closely aligned with the larger Asian powers but isolated from New Zealand, then

¹ Yang, S, "China in Fiji: displacing traditional players?" *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 65, No. 3, June 2011, 315.

² Firth, Fraenkel, Lal, *The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: A Coup to End All Coups?* Canberra, Australian National University Press, 2009, .3.

this strategy has already been partially realised. However, now that Fiji is drawing near to a democratic general election in 2014, Bainimarama's future is uncertain, and Fiji faces a political cross road. The decisions facing Fiji include a possible return to democracy and a choice to re-engage with their traditional allies such as New Zealand. Furthermore, while Fiji continues to engage with Asian nations such as China and India, the future of these relationships is yet to be seen. This chapter will analyse the isolation of Fiji and the degradation of governance within Fiji. Consideration will also be provided regarding the degradation of civil order and economic factors. It will then assess possible wider strategic impacts that these factors may have regarding the future of Fiji.

The termination of diplomatic and military ties between New Zealand and Fiji has created serious strategic consequences for both nations. Bainimarama, both through preference and practical necessity as part of his 'Look North' policy, is now seeking significant assistance from elsewhere. Bainimarama has increasingly claimed that Fiji has been deliberately ostracised by traditional partners such as New Zealand, and has repeatedly emphasised the importance of China and India within the Asia-Pacific region. Bainimarama has stated that given the economic growth of China and India, it would be more beneficial for Fiji to focus future strategic international relations with the rising Asian powers, rather than with New Zealand or Australia. As a result of Bainimarama's 'Look North' policy, India, Malaysia and China, have displayed the potential to displace the primacy of traditional players such as New Zealand and Australia.

The isolation of Fiji from New Zealand and Australia under Bainimarama, created a diplomatic and economic shortfall that some of the Asian powers have been happy to supplement. At present, the support provided to Fiji from China is primarily diplomatic

and financial. In April 2006, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visited Fiji and pledged support to the Fiji government via a Chinese plan to assist in the training of Fijian civil servants.³ In recent years China also invited Bainimarama to attend the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony.⁴ China has also provided support to the ‘Melanesian Spearhead Group’ (members of which include Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Fiji) via funding to support a new multinational Police Academy for the organisation, to be physically located in Fiji.⁵ As a direct result of Bainimarama’s ‘Look North’ policy, the Asian powers now exert far more influence within Fiji diplomatic and economic areas.

Until such point as Fiji returns to democracy and Bainimarama steps down from office, his foreign policy is likely to remain extant. Some six years on from the 2006 military coup, Bainimarama remains in charge of the nation as self-appointed Prime Minister, and despite promises, has not yet allowed his government to achieve effective democratic reform. Bainimarama’s government is dominated by senior officers of the RFMF. Bainimarama has promised to hold democratic elections in September 2014 however this date is still some way off. Furthermore, Bainimarama has previously promised to hold democratic elections (in 2009), however later reneged on this promise. It is yet to be seen whether or not Bainimarama can be trusted to conduct democratic elections in 2014 as he has stated. Even should democratic elections occur, the authenticity of such elections, and the subsequent government, are yet to be determined. With a military government still in control of Fiji, the political gap between Fiji and New Zealand has continued to widen.⁶

³ Yang, “China in Fiji: displacing traditional players?” *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 65, No. 3, June 2011, 307.

⁴ *Ibid*, 305.

⁵ Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote), 12 December 2012.

⁶ Crocombe, *Asia in the Pacific Islands: Replacing the West*, Suva: IPS Publications, 2007, 546.

There are limited solutions open to the New Zealand Government regarding the possible resumption of diplomatic relations with Fiji until the latter irreversibly commits to democracy. Options include the agreement in principle, for the opening of High Commissions in both Wellington and Suva, however Fiji does not currently view diplomatic relations with New Zealand and Australia to be as rewarding as those with nations such as Malaysia, India and China.⁷ In the short-term, use of international institutions such as the Pacific Islands Forum or the United Nations, may provide a suitable medium for diplomatic communications.

The military forces of New Zealand have historically provided secondment of personnel to the RFMF in order to supplement the latter, as was covered in Chapter 3. However, this historical support provided by the NZDF to the RFMF was discontinued once the RFMF established a more effective command structure in the early 1980's. For example expatriate New Zealander, Brigadier General Ian Thorpe commanded the RFMF during the period 1979 – 1982. Thorpe was the last New Zealand commander of the RFMF. In doing so he had to leave the New Zealand Army. Since this period, all senior positions within the RFMF have been held by Fijian RFMF officers. The NZDF has previously facilitated RFMF personnel to train in NZDF training establishments. However, the provision of support was suspended for periods following the coups conducted by the RFMF over the last 25 years. The New Zealand Army has periodically conducted training on behalf of the RFMF via the NZDF 'Mutual Assistance Programme' (in 2005 the author took part in a four month Mutual Assistance Training Team to Fiji to support an RFMF officer commissioning course).⁸ The NZDF has also conducted numerous combined training exercises and operations with the RFMF. In 2005, the RNZAF deployed a squadron to

⁷ Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote), 18 December 2012.

⁸ Neal, D, (from personal experience), 18 December 2012.

Viti Levu to take advantage of the tropical training opportunities that Fiji had to offer. Of significance, is the fact that during the Australian led stability operation involving international military intervention into East Timor during the period 1999-2000 (International Force For East Timor [INTERFET]), an RFMF infantry company was placed under command of an NZDF battalion for the early part of that operation. As with previous operations conducted involving the NZDF and the RFMF, the INTERFET operation was effective, with the RFMF company achieving interoperability with their NZDF counterparts.

The military forces of New Zealand and Fiji have for most of the last 50 years, maintained a very close relationship, mainly as a result of previous training and operational connections. This resulted in members of the two forces maintaining close professional affiliations and a high degree of trust.⁹ Up until the last coup, the NZDF provided a senior officer as Defence Advisor to the New Zealand High Commission in Fiji. The strong military affiliations previously maintained between New Zealand and Fiji assisted in positively supporting strong diplomatic relations. However, the continued political rift between Fiji and New Zealand has understandably crossed into the military realm.

Traditional friendships and affiliations between the NZDF and the RFMF are now being eroded through a complete lack of professional interface. Although many of the current, albeit more senior, generation of RFMF personnel may still feel affiliation with their New Zealand counterparts, the younger generation of RFMF personnel have had little opportunity to interact with their peers in the NZDF. In some cases, personnel of the

⁹ Neal, D, (from personal experience), 18 December 2012.

RFMF may feel animosity towards their NZDF counterparts due to the isolationist stance and criticism directed by Bainimarama towards New Zealand.

The professional isolation between both politicians and military personnel of New Zealand and Fiji may pose a future strategic risk for New Zealand, and one that will be particularly hard to mitigate if ties between the two nations are not resumed within the next five to ten years. This risk involves a potentially radical and alienated RFMF resident within New Zealand's strategic area of interest. Given the RFMF is the third largest military force in the South Pacific, this possibility may prove to be problematic, and one that may be particularly concerning in the event of any future political or military instability within the region.

China, alongside other key Asian nations, has displayed an interest in Fiji's military affairs and have partially filled the void created by the isolation of Fiji from New Zealand and Australia. Many RFMF officers receive their senior training at military staff college in India, Malaysia and China.¹⁰ Some aspects of RFMF junior officer training and Special Forces training are conducted in China.¹¹ China has also offered military training and support in logistics based roles, and in 2007 Fiji sent a defence attaché to Beijing for 'defence talks'.¹²

When discussing diplomatic, military and economic engagement between Fiji and China, questions may be asked as to whether or not China would venture to the extent of funding or supporting the development of the RFMF (Navy), as proposed by Bainimarama.

¹⁰ Crocombe, R, *Asia in the Pacific Island: Replacing the West*, (Suva: IPS Publications, 2007), 546.

¹¹ When the author deployed to Fiji in 2005, it was found that some RFMF personnel had received Special Forces training conducted by the PLA in China, (Neal, from personal experience, 18 December 2012).

¹² Yang, "China in Fiji: displacing traditional players?" *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 65, No. 3, June 2011, 312.

Certainly in 2011 some disclosed sources indicated that Fiji was offered a ‘second hand’ Chinese military vessel from the Peoples Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) to the RFMF however, to date Fiji has not accepted this (un-substantiated) offer. Given growing tensions and competition between China and the US in the Asia-Pacific region, such a move would be considered to be aggressive by the US (who have a stated national security objective of retaining secure sea lines of communication), and Australia. New Zealand is a member of several multi-lateral strategic partnerships such as FPDA,¹³ and ABCA.¹⁴ In the event of possible overt military support by China to Fiji, the rift that already exists between New Zealand and Fiji may increase, particularly when taking into account New Zealand’s strategic partnerships, and when viewed by politicians holding realist, rather than idealist views.

The severance of political ties between New Zealand and Fiji created a number of significant strategic problems for New Zealand. The Fiji Interim Government is essentially a ‘rogue’ regime and one that has alienated itself from some democratic nations due to its recent unethical actions. The unpredictable nature of the Fiji Interim Government, and its links to ineffective levels of civil order and dubious governance could lead to negative effects elsewhere within the spectrum of strategic affairs and international relations. The Australian Institute of Criminology has linked poor levels of governance to an increase in poverty, trans-national crime and further political instability. This theory has been described by McCusker, as the ‘cycle of cumulative impact,’¹⁵ whereby degraded levels of governance, civil-order, economic status, and standard of living, cause to further

¹³ Five Power Defence Agreement.

¹⁴ America, Britain, Canada, Australia (includes New Zealand).

¹⁵ McCusker, “Transnational Crime in the Pacific Island: Real or Apparent Danger”, *Australian Institute of Criminology*, Canberra, Australian Government, 2006, 3.

antagonise the other associated factors evident within this paradigm, with the overall situation, particularly civil order and economic factors, progressively worsening.

A degradation of the effectiveness of the Fiji Police Force and generic levels civil order, combined with a large, un-monitored maritime border encompassing Fiji sovereign territory, has resulted in a situation that is potentially favourable to an increase of trans-national crime. Trans-national crime in Fiji as in other South Pacific nations, has become a substantial problem in the last two decades. Trans-national crime includes people-smuggling (particularly women for the purpose of sexual exploitation), small-arms weapons trafficking, resource exploitation, money laundering, and drug-smuggling. All of these trans-national crime-related factors are currently present within Fiji in varying degrees however to be fair, they are also present in many other nations of the South Pacific. In 2000, a large shipment of illegal drugs (heroin), with an estimated value of approximately \$200 million (NZ dollars) was uncovered in Suva, primarily through the efforts of the international police community (INTERPOL). In 2004, a shipment of methamphetamine was also discovered in Suva, with an estimated value of some \$1 billion (NZ dollars). It was discovered by INTERPOL that both of these shipments of narcotics were destined for distribution to markets in New Zealand and Australia.¹⁶

Given the current state of trans-national crime that exists in many South Pacific nations, the presence of trans-national crime in Fiji is not surprising and cannot be comprehensively linked to Fiji's poor levels of governance. However it is likely that sub-standard levels of governance in Fiji may contribute towards the problem, particularly given the questionable performance of the Fiji Police Force in recent decades. Although relations between the Fiji

¹⁶ Crocombe, *Asia in the Pacific Islands: Replacing the West*, Suva: IPS Publications, 2007, 187.

and New Zealand Police Forces' are normal from an operational point of view, Fiji as a nation is likely to continue to struggle with the problem of reducing the incidence of trans-national crime without the direct support of more developed nations such as the US, New Zealand and Australia. This comment reflects the lack of leadership, training and resources allocated and available to the Fiji Police Force in recent decades. Any significant levels of trans-national crime within Fiji may negatively impact upon New Zealand if Fiji effectively provides international criminal elements with a transportation node to support the distribution of illegal drugs to New Zealand.

Any nation with sub-standard levels of governance, policing and civil order will tend to attract international criminal elements. This is due to the fact that they serve as a safe-haven to criminal elements whereby illegal activities may be conducted with less risk of detection than in more developed nations.

Poor levels of governance, when combined with a lack of policing, and surveillance support provided by New Zealand and Australia, have also resulted in the reduced ability of Fiji to protect its natural resources, particularly migratory fish stocks. The RNZAF was once particularly active in monitoring Fiji's EEZ, primarily utilising P-3 Orion maritime patrol aircraft. However, given the severance of military support from New Zealand to Fiji, such military assistance is no longer possible. Fiji has no maritime patrol aircraft, while the already limited assets of the RFMF (Navy) have been operating at less than 150 days at sea per year.¹⁷

¹⁷ Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote), 12 December 2012.

Fiji is located in a part of the Pacific Ocean home to migratory fish species such as the Southern Blue Fin Tuna. With Fiji's EEZ home to large numbers of this desirable species, it has become attractive to foreign owned commercial fishing fleets, particularly those from China and Japan. International fishing fleets have increasingly and intensively targeted Southern Blue Fin Tuna within Fiji's EEZ during the last decade. In 2001, 241 fishing licences were issued to commercial fishing companies by the Fiji Government Fisheries Department, despite the recommended number of commercial fishing licences being set at 60.¹⁸ There have also been frequent accusations of foreign companies bribing Fiji Government officials to obtain these licences. Almost all of these commercial fishing companies are of foreign ownership. Therefore, little revenue resulting from international commercial fishing within Fiji's EEZ actually benefits the Fiji economy, with most of the financial results remaining off-shore.

Commander Norris of the United States Coast Guard has claimed that in the past five years, illegal commercial fishing within Fiji's EEZ, and other geographic areas in the South Pacific has increased significantly.¹⁹ An estimated 1,800,000 million tonnes of Southern Blue Fin Tuna was caught within the Pacific Ocean in 2008 alone. A significant percentage of this Tuna harvest was allegedly conducted illegally, mainly by aggressive commercial fishing fleets from China and Japan. Such a situation has placed significant pressure on fish stocks in Fiji's EEZ, however Fiji is almost powerless to enforce this matter.

Studies conducted by McCusker and reinforced by Commander Norris, have linked poor levels of governance and instability with an increase in trans-national crime. In this case

¹⁸ Crocombe, *Asia in the Pacific Islands: Replacing the West*, Suva, IPS Publications, 2007, 185.

¹⁹ Norris, A, "The Fight for Fish" *Proceedings: U.S. Naval Institute* 136, no. 8 (2010), 34-40.

the key trans-national crime specified is that of illegal fishing and drug-smuggling. These findings add some validation to the theory of ‘the cycle of cumulative impact’, as described by the Australian Institute of Criminology.²⁰

In addition to the severance of political and military ties between New Zealand and Fiji, Bainimarama’s coup also resulted in a reduction of financial assistance from New Zealand to Fiji.²¹ Many countries donating aid to Fiji have focused on education, poverty reduction and improvements in health by targeting associated programmes available in Fiji. Since the coup of 2000, the volume of aid provided to Fiji, from democratic nations, declined significantly. New Zealand continues to provide Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) to Fiji however this support was reduced following the coup of 2006. In the financial year 2005/2006 the New Zealand government provided \$7.8 million (NZ dollars) in ODA to Fiji. However, in the financial year 2006/2007, New Zealand ODA provided to Fiji dropped to \$2.5 million with a further drop to \$2.2 million in financial year 2007/2008.²² During the financial year of 2010/2011, ODA provided by the New Zealand government to Fiji increased to approximately \$7 million with a total of approximately \$260 million being provided to the greater South Pacific region.²³ Australia also reduced levels of financial assistance to Fiji during the same period. As a result, Bainimarama sought financial assistance from elsewhere, particularly from China and other Asian countries. This strategy proved to be an effective means to significantly increase Fiji’s monetary reserves in the short-term.

²⁰ McCusker, “Transnational Crime in the Pacific Island: Real or Apparent Danger”, *Australian Institute of Criminology*, Canberra, Australian Government, 2006, 3.

²¹ Milne, T, “*New Challenges for Pacific Security*” (paper presented for Canterbury University, 2008), 174.

²² Yang, “China in Fiji: displacing traditional players?” *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 65, No. 3, June 2011, 316.

²³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand Government, accessed 26 March 2012, www.mfat.govt.nz.

China carefully calculates its foreign diplomatic policies and is cautious when engaging marginalised nations such as Fiji. In doing so, China will consider the requirement to avoid antagonising democratic nations that may have previously been engaged with Fiji. China also normally maintains a ‘non-interference’ policy in regards to the internal affairs of other nations. As such, unethical or illegal internal affairs within Fiji would normally have no bearing on Chinese foreign policy towards that nation. Following Fiji’s isolation from New Zealand and Australia in December 2006, China was quick to offer both financial and diplomatic assistance to Bainimarama. What was alarming to some strategic analysts was the fact that China’s financial assistance provided to Fiji increased 700% within one year following Bainimarama’s 2006 coup.²⁴ In 2009 approximately \$120 million (US dollars) was provided to Fiji by China, mainly for the purpose of developing agriculture within rural areas.²⁵ China has also provided a \$400 million ‘soft loan’²⁶ facility for Bainimarama to access as or when required. Since 2007, China has also been involved in the funding of three significant projects in Fiji, namely a squatter resettlement programme, a government support programme, and the Nadarivatu Hydro Power Project (estimated cost of this project is approximately \$150 million).²⁷

While such economic support from China to Fiji may be considered positive for the latter nation, this situation does create some concern. While China is quick to offer financial assistance to Fiji, many of these financial advances are not always provided with real intent to develop key infrastructure required to benefit Fiji’s economy, particularly when considering China’s habit of providing a ‘soft loan’ facility to Fiji. A number of the

²⁴ Yang, “China in Fiji: displacing traditional players?” *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 65, No. 3, June 2011, 305.

²⁵ Zhu, *China’s New Diplomacy: Rationale, Strategies and Significance*, (Surrey, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), 140.

²⁶ A ‘soft loan’ includes reduced interest rates and flexible repayment options.

²⁷ Yang, “China in Fiji: displacing traditional players?” *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 65, No. 3, June 2011, 307.

projects in Fiji that are funded by China often involve the use of Chinese state owned companies, rather than employing local contractors. Fiji risks becoming heavily reliant on Chinese finance as a benefit rather than as a pragmatic enhancement of the economy. Rather than developing a comprehensive and productive economy, Fiji's ability to sustain long-term financial productivity may be limited, while at the same time they risk mortgaging their future by becoming overly dependent on foreign aid.²⁸

While the enhanced influence of China in Fiji may have some potential for positive results, China's rapid economic growth in recent decades may place significant pressure on Fiji's economy. In the two decades leading to 2007, China achieved annual economic growth of approximately 10% per year.²⁹ There are currently more than 3000 state-controlled Chinese businesses within the South Pacific region, some of which are established in Fiji. China currently has 20 state owned commercial fishing companies residing in Fiji, all of which are intensively harvesting fish resources within Fiji's EEZ.³⁰ Economic trade between China and Fiji in 2008 equated to \$92 million (US dollars). China has a significant requirement for resources to fuel the requirements of its large population and rapidly growing economy. Resource requirements include hydro-carbons, precious metals, heavy metals required for industry, and fisheries. China has actively pursued the exploitation of hydro-carbon resources within Fiji's EEZ over the past decade. China's interest in Fiji's resources cannot be overstated. Fiji's status as an economic and logistic hub within the South Pacific makes it even more attractive to China. Significant economic

²⁸ Barbara, "Antipodean Statebuilding: The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands and Australian Intervention in the South Pacific," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 2, no.2 (2008), 142.

²⁹ Tong, "Comparing Trade Performance of China and India," *East Asian Policy* 1, no.1 (2009), 61.

³⁰ Yang, "China in Fiji: displacing traditional players?" *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 65, No. 3, June 2011, 310.

activity from China within the Fiji economy and EEZ may place significant pressure on Fiji's resources.

Internal instability and civil disorder has created obvious and immediate detrimental effects on the Fiji economy following every coup. Not only do the illegitimate actions of the RFMF serve to temporarily halt ODA and temporarily degrade tourism, subsequent causal effects of the coups serve to further degrade the economy. Following Rabuka's 1987 coup, and the subsequent discriminatory policies associated with Fiji's 1990 constitution, many Indo-Fijians chose to leave Fiji and permanently emigrated elsewhere.

The unintended consequences of coups have included a reduction in skilled labour and a financial exodus. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) statistics claim that approximately 60% of skilled professional workers within Fiji have either temporarily departed or permanently emigrated from Fiji in the period between 1987 and 2005.³¹ The Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics (FIBOS) stated in a 2009 report, that 63,417 Fiji citizens permanently departed Fiji during the period 1995 to 2007. 80% of these emigrations consisted of Indo-Fijian persons.³² This exodus has been one of the most extreme examples of this trend the world has seen in recent decades. Traditionally in Fiji, Indo-Fijians (along with Fijians of European and Chinese lineage) make up the bulk of the people involved with the private (particularly technical economic and productive) sectors of the economy. Indo-Fijians also tended to be significantly involved in the provision of expert skills and professional services in both the private and public sectors. This group of emigrating personnel of Indo-Fijian lineage has been dominated by lawyers, doctors, teachers, engineers, accountants and other skilled business people. The reason for the

³¹Xing, "*Socio-Economic Determinants for Poverty Reduction: The case of Fiji*", (MPhil Thesis, Massey University, 2010), 48.

³² Ibid.

emigration of skilled persons from Fiji (particularly Indo-Fijians) was largely due to fear resulting from a lack of physical security, economic uncertainty and racist policies instigated under Rabuka's discriminatory 1990 constitution. Later coup's only served to worsen the fear held by many Indo-Fijians.³³ As a direct consequence of the various coups occurring within Fiji, a significant proportion of skilled and professional persons permanently emigrated from Fiji. The loss of knowledge and skill served to undermine the Fiji economy.

Under Rabuka's Public Service Decree, it was made law that at least 50% of all public service employee's were required to be indigenous Fijians, with a maximum of 40% of public sector employment positions able to be held by non-indigenous Fijians.³⁴ Many indigenous Fijians saw this initiative as being positive as it appeared that they were being actively encouraged towards public sector positions. However, this policy discouraged positive vetting and natural competition. The new racial quota system significantly degraded the level of efficiency in Fijian governmental organisations due to many good applicants being declined due to their ethnic (Indo-Fijian) background. Towards the end of Rabuka's tenure in control of Fiji (note that later on, Rabuka held office as Prime Minister), Fiji's economic decline reflected the decline of governance within the country. By the time Rabuka left office in May 1999, the Fiji economy was described as being on the verge of collapse.

Conflict, internal instability and lack of civil order have proven to be a significant constraint in regards to economic development within Fiji. Fiji's economy is heavily dominated by sugar exporting, local manufacturing and tourism, and as such the Fiji

³³ Gounder, "*Dimensions Of Conflict And The Role Of Foreign Aid In Fiji*", (Discussion Paper No. 05.02, Department of Applied and International Economics, Massey University, 2005), 17.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 5.

economy is significantly influenced by the role of the government.³⁵ Fiji's narrow economic base is immediately and directly affected by the performance of the agriculture and tourism sectors. The poor performance of one of these sectors will have significant negative flow on effects elsewhere within the Fiji economy. Tourism in Fiji in particular, is estimated to provide employment for up to 45,000 Fijians, making tourism the major source of paid employment for the indigenous Fijian population. Tourism declined in Fiji following every military coup. In 1999 tourist numbers were estimated at 410,000 people per year however, in the 12 months following the 2000 coup, tourist numbers fell to 294,000. Tourist numbers in 2005 were estimated at 545,000 people however, declined to 351,000 people in the 12 months following the 2006 coup.³⁶ Political instability and civil disorder have an immediate and detrimental effect on the Fiji economy, particularly via the tourism sector.

In the past twenty five years, Fiji has suffered from negative growth rates, degraded export earnings, falling commodity prices and reduced income from tourism. The Fiji economic recession has resulted in significantly higher levels of poverty among the population. In 1977 it was assessed that approximately 10 % of Fijian households lived below the poverty line. This figure increased to 25 % in 1991³⁷ and to approximately 34% in 2002.³⁸ Economic statistics sourced from the World Bank (2007) and Economist Intelligence Unit (2009) as represented by Xing in his 2010 paper, indicate that immediately following every coup, Fiji's economic growth (Gross Domestic Product) has fallen to levels of (up to) -

³⁵Gounder, "*Dimensions Of Conflict And The Role Of Foreign Aid In Fiji*", (Discussion Paper No. 05.02, Department of Applied and International Economics, Massey University, 2005), 6-7.

³⁶Xing, "*Socio-Economic Determinants for Poverty Reduction: The case of Fiji*", (MPhil Thesis, Massey University, 2010), 45.

³⁷Gounder, "*Dimensions Of Conflict And The Role Of Foreign Aid In Fiji*", (Discussion Paper No. 05.02, Department of Applied and International Economics, Massey University, 2005), 11.

³⁸Xing, "*Socio-Economic Determinants for Poverty Reduction: The case of Fiji*", (MPhil Thesis, Massey University, 2010), 57.

7%.³⁹ Xing goes on to state that the aftermath of the 1987 coups was characterised by the economic collapse of the Fiji business sector, a decline in tourism, increases in unemployment, decline in private investment, and depletion of foreign exchange reserves.⁴⁰ Following every coup in Fiji, severe negative social indicators have also become apparent. These symptoms include increased (public) health problems, rising crime rates, an increase in homelessness and further civil unrest that in turn, served to exacerbate the problem of failing levels of governance and economic confidence.⁴¹ Xing concluded that the series of military coups and political upheavals resulted in many Fijian people losing their livelihoods and falling into poverty.⁴²

It is likely that the general population have lost confidence in both the government and the RFMF. Most of these negative economic and social indicators are directly linked to the poor levels of governance and civil order exercised by the Fiji Interim Government. Unfortunately for the people of Fiji, until governance and levels of civil order are enhanced, economic and social indicators are likely to remain at a degraded level to what they were prior to the cycle of coups that occurred from 1987. Also, as long as a military dictatorship remains in control of Fiji, it is clear that democratic nations will not engage in a programme of infrastructure enhancement and nation building in the failing country.

When taking into account Fiji's positioning within New Zealand's strategic area of interest, it is reasonable to assume that any significant issues regarding governance or civil

³⁹ Xing, "*Socio-Economic Determinants for Poverty Reduction: The case of Fiji*", (MPhil Thesis, Massey University, 2010), 39.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Gounder, "*Dimensions Of Conflict And The Role Of Foreign Aid In Fiji*", (Discussion Paper No. 05.02, Department of Applied and International Economics, Massey University, 2005), 7.

⁴² Xing, "*Socio-Economic Determinants for Poverty Reduction: The case of Fiji*," (MPhil Thesis, Massey University, 2010), 147.

order in Fiji may require partial resolution by New Zealand. This is due to both Fiji's proximity to New Zealand, and the fact that degraded levels of governance or civil order in Fiji will affect New Zealand directly, or indirectly in some manner. Fiji, as a key logistic and economic node in the South Pacific, sits adjacent to maritime lines of communication utilised by the majority of New Zealand maritime trading vessels. Electronic cable communications that service New Zealand also pass through Fiji, and these communication mediums require security. Fiji's strategic positioning in the South Pacific should not be under-estimated in importance to New Zealand. The economic risk to Fiji's resource zones is significant, particularly given the inability of Fiji to police their EEZ. Given that many of Fiji's fisheries resources are migratory species such as the Southern Blue Fin Tuna, any degradation of such a resource will also negatively affect fisheries resources within New Zealand's EEZ.

Trans-national crime within Fiji, particularly that which involves the distribution of illegal narcotics, provides additional security challenges to New Zealand, particularly if the drugs are distributed to the latter nation. Poor levels of governance and civil order may also serve to exacerbate the overall political and economic situation as described under McCusker's 'cycle of cumulative impact'. The continued isolation of the Fiji Government and military from that of New Zealand is also creating a nation and a military that will soon have little affiliation with New Zealand, or many other democratic nations. Given that the RFMF is the third largest military force in the South Pacific, and with rising political and military tension and competition occurring in the Asia-Pacific region, the prospect of having an alienated and radical RFMF within New Zealand's strategic area of interest paints a potentially grim picture for the future.

In the event of any significant political, economic, military or climatic catastrophe within the South Pacific, it would be in New Zealand's national interests to have a positive relationship with Fiji. The possible alienation and radicalisation of the RFMF is even more alarming, particularly if they become firmly engaged with non-democratic nations who form no part of the NATO, FPDA or ABCA strategic partnerships. As such, Bainimarama's 'Look North' policy poses somewhat of a concern for strategic analysts who hold realist political views. It would appear that Bainimarama's strategic endgame for the future of Fiji may hold little importance in the Fiji – New Zealand relationship.

The challenges mentioned in this chapter provide the New Zealand government with a dilemma. While New Zealand arguably should not support an illegitimate government, failure to decisively engage with the Fiji government in the short-term may result in further weakness regarding levels of governance and civil order in Fiji. This may result in an associated negative effect on the Fiji economy, rates of trans-national crime, and resource security. Furthermore, the self-imposed isolation of Bainimarama from New Zealand combined with his 'Look North' policy may well create a diplomatic and military rift between the two nations that may be difficult to repair if not mitigated in the short-term. It is in New Zealand's national interest to re-engage with Fiji, and to assist the latter nation regain its former status as a democratic, prosperous and stable nation. While this should be New Zealand's desired endgame in regards to the future of Fiji and the New Zealand-Fiji relationship, the future political direction of Fiji following the tenure of Bainimarama, and the 2014 general election is facing a cross road and is yet to be determined.

CHAPTER 8

A NUMBER OF CHANGES FOR NEW ZEALAND'S FIJI POLICY: POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATIONS

The New Zealand Government has maintained an isolationist policy and a series of sanctions towards Fiji following the coup staged by Bainimarama in 2006. While the New Zealand Government continues to provide financial support to Fiji in the form of ODA, there is currently very little formal political interface between the New Zealand Government and the Fiji Interim Government. Although New Zealand still operates a very lightly staffed High Commission within Suva, there has been no senior representative of the New Zealand Government present in Fiji since Mr Michael Green (former New Zealand High Commissioner to Fiji) was expelled by Bainimarama in June 2007.¹

In addition to the isolationist stance adopted by the New Zealand Government towards the Fiji Interim Government, New Zealand has gone as far as to impose travel bans on personnel linked to the Fiji Interim Government and RFMF, preventing such people from travelling to New Zealand. New Zealand has also frozen Fiji participation in the Recognised Seasonal Employer Policy and has imposed some sporting sanctions on Fiji.² New Zealand has attempted dialogue with Fiji via utilisation of Foreign Ministers involved with the Pacific Islands Forum however these attempts at dialogue have been largely unsuccessful. The stance adopted by the New Zealand Government is unsurprising. Bainimarama has contravened well established democratic principles by illegally overthrowing a civilian government through the use of armed coercion. The action was fully supported by the RFMF. The coup staged by Bainimarama in 2006 was both un-ethically and illegal, contravening the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

¹ Neal, D (from interview with Green, M. 25 June 2011). 18 December 2012.

² The Recognised Seasonal Employer policy allows for the provision of temporary work visa's to facilitate people to live and work in New Zealand.

1948, Article 21.³ Further degradation of human rights have occurred in Fiji in recent years. On 10 April 2009, the Fiji Interim Government announced the ‘Public Emergency Regulation,’ a policy that curtails freedom of assembly and speech, including controls over the Fiji media.⁴ The Public Emergency Regulation also provides the Fiji Police Force and RFMF immunity from prosecution if they perform acts of violence in the ‘best interests of maintaining public safety’. Although in early 2012 Bainimarama lifted the Public Emergency Regulation, the powers vested in his regime under the Public Order Act 1969 still provide the Fiji Police Force and the RFMF, with powers of martial law and political repression over the population of Fiji.⁵ In some extreme cases, there have been allegations of illegal questioning, torture, and even in one case, murder of civilians at the hands of the Fiji Police Force and the RFMF.⁶

Some six years on from the 2006 military coup, Fiji remains under control of a military government. The people of Fiji continue to be denied the rights to freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and have been unable to elect a government of their own choice via democratic elections. Bainimarama is not only effectively the self-imposed leader of Fiji, he has gone as far as militarising the Fiji Interim Government by handing many significant governmental portfolios to serving officers of the RFMF. At the time of writing, the position of Fiji Commissioner of Police is held by Brigadier Ioane Naivalarua of the RFMF. Despite promises made by Bainimarama to hold democratic elections in September 2014, this event is still some way from realisation. The validity of the proposed Fiji Constitution, currently being drafted under Bainimarama’s leadership, remains

³ “Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948,” United Nations, accessed 26 February 2011, www.un.org.

⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand Government, accessed 19 February 2012, www.mfat.govt.nz.

⁵ Ashdown, N, “Straw Poll; Fiji begins preparations for democratic elections,” *Janes Intelligence Review*, April 2012, 26.

⁶ Fraenkel; Firth; Lal, *The 2006 Military Takeover In Fiji; A Coup To End All Coups*, Canberra, The Australian University Press, 2009, 56.

questionable, particularly if this constitution potentially serves to legalise the RFMF as the enforcers of the constitution. This factor is relevant when analysing ‘Principle 3’ of Commodore Bainimarama’s paper titled ‘Ending the Coup Culture; 14 Key Principles’ (Peoples Charter for Change, Peace and Progress).⁷ If democratic elections do occur in 2014, their validity and the subsequent authenticity of Fiji’s democratic status may also remain questionable.

The New Zealand Government is right in isolating itself from Bainimarama and Fiji. The Fiji Interim Government is not democratic. Establishing any formal governmental links to such a regime may partially legitimise Bainimarama’s government and may contravene the opinions of some of New Zealand’s democratic political associations, such as with Australia. Given the levels of distrust currently held by many Fijian’s towards their own government, it is possible that should New Zealand resume formal ties with the rogue regime, New Zealand may lose credibility in the eyes of many Fijians. Therefore, until Fiji irreversibly commits to holding democratic elections, the New Zealand Government should not alter its isolationist stance. In noting this factor, the continued isolationist policy of New Zealand towards Fiji does create somewhat of a dilemma, and one that risks the further degradation of governance, civil order and a potentially radical RFMF. However, until Fiji has convincingly demonstrated its desire to return to democracy, New Zealand’s current policy should be extant.

It is here that the question should be addressed, ‘*what is New Zealand’s desired strategic endgame in regards to the future of Fiji, and the New Zealand – Fiji relationship?*’ The future of Fiji will ideally be that of an economically prosperous, stable, legitimate

⁷ Fiji Government, “Peoples Charter for Change, Peace & Progress,” (Paper presented by the Fiji Government, Suva, 2008), 15.

democracy, that is able to maintain civil order through strong governance and is supported by a viable police force. The RFMF would be a politically neutral instrument of national power whose primary responsibilities would be that of supporting the government via focussing on the requirement for external security. Ideally, the future Fiji Government would maintain a close and friendly relationship with the New Zealand Government, while the instruments of New Zealand national power, including the NZDF and the New Zealand Police, would maintain comprehensive links and alliances with their counterparts in Fiji. New Zealand's desired endgame could be achieved via use of a comprehensive, whole of government approach utilising all of the instruments of national power available to best effect.

Diplomatically, the New Zealand Government should engage with the Fiji Interim government once the latter has convincingly committed to holding authentic democratic elections. This should occur at the point that Bainimarama formally commits to, and begins final planning for the elections.

Once the Fiji Interim Government have committed to holding democratic elections, then the New Zealand response should be cautious and incremental. Caution on New Zealand's part would be required as the Fiji Interim Government is still an illegitimate regime. As such, it would be imprudent of New Zealand to commit to full diplomatic relations until such point as there is an authentic democratic government in Fiji.

The New Zealand Government could initiate diplomatic links to Fiji via another exchange of high commissioners, or use of a special envoy. The goal of such a link could be to formally re-establish contact with the Fiji Interim Government and to support planning for

the democratic elections. At this point it would be hoped that elections would be no more than approximately 12 months distant. If not willing to liaise directly with the Fiji Interim Government, New Zealand may benefit from attempting to utilise international or regional organisations such as the Pacific Islands Forum or the United Nations as a medium for further dialogue. Use of multi-lateral (rather than bi-lateral) dialogue may better facilitate a regional solution to the current problem, and one that is agreeable to a multitude of South Pacific nations. It is possible that Fiji would more readily engage in dialogue with the Pacific Islands Forum or the United Nations rather than directly with the New Zealand Government. Direct bilateral communication with the New Zealand Government may be seen as patronising to some Fijians. This is particularly relevant given levels of distrust that some Fijians may hold regarding the motives of the New Zealand Government, and the distaste with which some indigenous Fijians may view such advice (many Fijians are justifiably proud of their release from colonial dependence). Use of international or regional organisations may also provide the New Zealand Government with a legitimate political buffer between themselves, and what may still potentially be seen as an illegitimate regime.

As a note of caution, in some government circles within Fiji, there is some feeling that membership of the Pacific Islands Forum or the Commonwealth is no longer a high priority for Fiji.⁸ Bainimarama's 'Look North' policy may have reinforced this feeling. It is possible that future New Zealand diplomatic advances towards Fiji may be received with some level of ambivalence.

⁸ Tonkin-Covell, (direct quote), 10 December 2012.

New Zealand's potential reinforcement of the Fiji elections could include support in regards to physical conduct, as well as provision of independent oversight to enhance legitimacy to the process. Whether this team would work in isolation from other nations, or form part of a greater multi-lateral delegation is uncertain. The leader of the New Zealand team could be a senior diplomat, while supporting members of the team could include a variety of New Zealand civil servants, Police and NZDF personnel. Supporting the transition to democracy in Fiji is important. A potential failure to hold fair elections and install a democratic government in Fiji may result in a continuation of the current dilemma.

Once a democratically elected government is installed in Fiji, New Zealand will be able to resume full governmental links with the nation. It may include a fully manned New Zealand High Commission in Fiji, led by a senior New Zealand diplomat.⁹ At this time, it may be prudent to analyse the validity of the latest Fiji Constitution, which would almost certainly have been authorised by Bainimarama. Validating and reviewing the constitution would be important to prevent any future manipulation or misinterpretation by the RFMF. Any viable constitution should include the requirement for the RFMF to remain politically neutral and should stipulate the requirement for RFMF allegiance to either the President of Fiji or the Fiji Parliament, rather than to the constitution itself. A suitable organisation to vet or amend the Fiji Constitution could be the United Nations.

The standard of the Fiji Constitution is of vital importance and may be a key future friction point within Fiji. Given the levels of political turmoil that have existed in Fiji since 1987, reviewing the constitution may be met with cynicism and resistance from many Fijians. It

⁹ At the time of writing, New Zealand and Fiji have agreed to an exchange of High Commissioners however, this arrangement has not yet been carried out, and may not even be seen as a high priority by Fiji.

should be remembered that Fiji is in the process of drafting a third constitution following earlier 1990 and 1997 constitutions, and that Bainimarama abrogated the last Fiji Constitution in 1999. Furthermore, some politically aligned or motivated organisations, including the GCC, various political parties, and even the Methodist and Catholic Church, may engage in discussion regarding any proposed change to the constitution. Many Fijian's will wish for a democratic and cosmopolitan Fiji where all citizens are treated fairly however, some may also wish to preserve certain rights and privilege for indigenous Fijians. Many indigenous Fijians may wish to retain a minimum level of political dominance within Fiji and some form of physical guardianship regarding ownership of land, seabed and foreshore. Lastly, given the actions of the RFMF in recent decades, it is likely that this organisation will wish to play a part in the drafting of any new constitution. However, the RFMF requires to avoid any political involvement, and should return to a status of political neutrality.

It has become known that senior members of the Methodist and Catholic Church within Fiji have maintained some form of political interest. This has proven to be particularly relevant in regards to the Methodist Church of Fiji which has been accused of supporting the coups of 1987 and 2000. In Fiji, involvement in religion by the population is much more widespread than in New Zealand. A large proportion of the indigenous Fiji population regularly attend church services, with the majority belonging to the Methodist Church. Given such an overt religious following among the population, the Methodist Church of Fiji in particular, is capable of providing an effective communication medium of a political nature regarding events in Fiji. Within Fiji during past periods of political turmoil, ministers of the Methodist Church have often provided a political voice from the pulpit.

The culture of political involvement by the Methodist Church of Fiji has almost certainly helped sway the opinion of many Fijians towards a nationalist leaning. Many coup participants or instigators such as Rabuka, claimed a divine calling to help justify their actions. Much of the planning for the 1987 coup was held at the residence of Methodist Minister Tomasi Raikivi, while nationalist opinions were voiced from Methodist pulpits.¹⁰ In many Pacific Island nations the church does provide political comment and within indigenous Fiji culture, the church is considered to be a fundamental pillar of society. Spiritualism is considered to be fundamentally linked to the land and the people. This concept of *Lotu* and *Vanua* was examined in Chapter 4 of this paper.

A culture change in Fiji that would cease political comment from the Methodist Church is required, and this would better steer the nation towards a mature and viable democracy. Representatives of the Methodist Church of New Zealand could help mentor their counterparts in Fiji towards a position of political neutrality. Although some analysts may find this concept somewhat abstract, it is a fact that politically biased sermons delivered from Methodist Ministers have motivated radical and nationalist ideals among the Fiji population in the past.

During every period of internal instability in Fiji since 1987, the RFMF or elements thereof, have contributed to the degradation of democracy in Fiji. Although many alleged instigators of the various coup's and mutinies have sometimes remained at large, it has ultimately been armed soldiers of the RFMF who have enforced their leaders' political will. It is essential that the rank and file of the RFMF learn to remain politically neutral, and this requirement is essentially the crux of the current problem. Failure of the RFMF to

¹⁰ Field; Baba; Nabobo-Baba, *Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup*, Auckland, Reed Publishing Ltd, 2005, 40.

depart from the Fiji political arena will likely lead to repeats of the mistakes made by the RFMF since 1987.

The NZDF could assist the RFMF in building a culture of political neutrality and ethical command via supporting comprehensive leadership and command training for the latter in addition to a possible programme supporting RFMF capability development. Rather than such options being conducted in a sporadic manner, support could be carefully co-ordinated to comprehensively target RFMF commanders and key capability requirements. Such a strategy would serve to gradually change the culture of politically motivated action by members of the RFMF. The strategy would require continued support from the NZDF over an extended period and would need significant allocated resources and funding. However, although being costly to New Zealand in terms of time and resources, such an approach could prove to be decisive in assisting the RFMF to become politically neutral. In turn, this would reduce the risk of future insecurity occurring in Fiji.

It is in the national interest of New Zealand to retain close ties to the RFMF via the NZDF. However, while the re-establishment of military ties between the two nations should be comprehensive, it should also be cautious and incremental. Overt and high profile offers of support from the NZDF to the RFMF may be met with suspicion and may be viewed as patronising to the RFMF if the matter is not treated carefully.

As a means to initiate formal links with the RFMF, a logical step could be the re-establishment of a Defence Attaché' to Fiji with a senior officer from the NZDF. Such an individual could be posted to the New Zealand High Commission in Fiji and immediately re-engage with the senior command of the RFMF. Other options the NZDF may consider

to support the RFMF could include the provision of Mutual Assistance Training Teams. These teams could focus on the conduct of command training in support of the RFMF within Fiji itself.

The NZDF may also consider the secondment of personnel to the RFMF. For example, provision of a senior NZDF officer skilled in organisational restructure, logistics, or human resources may be a means of supporting the development of the RFMF without antagonising their current command structure. Other options include the possible provision of a Chief of Staff to support the Commander RFMF.¹¹

RFMF personnel could be invited to take part in leadership and command training conducted by the NZDF in New Zealand, while members of the RFMF could also be sponsored to visit New Zealand to take part in collective training opportunities. Likewise in time, the NZDF may request to utilise the territory of Fiji to support the requirement to conduct tropical and amphibious training. The NZDF may also consider more specialised options to support RFMF capability development. These options could include training and mentorship being provided to the RFMF Special Forces. Such a move could serve to focus RFMF Special Forces towards authentic military operations and away from domestic internal security. Lastly, given the strategic importance of the RFMF (Navy), personnel secondments, training and mentorship could be also be provided from the RNZN, to the RFMF (Navy).

Once political links with the future democratic government of Fiji have been resumed, the re-establishment of military ties between the NZDF and RFMF could quickly follow as is

¹¹ Neal, D. (The NZDF provide a Chief of Staff to support the military forces of Papua New Guinea). 8 March 2013.

detailed above. The NZDF as an instrument of national power would reflect the will of the New Zealand Government. The resumption of a sound military relationship between the two nations, alongside the re-establishment of a viable constitution, may be one of the more crucial aspects to assist in preventing future instability in Fiji, specifically by encouraging the RFMF to adopt a policy of political neutrality. The NZDF could prove to be a valuable tool for the New Zealand Government to utilise in order to support viable long-term political stability in Fiji.

Alongside political involvement and armed coercion by the RFMF, the Fiji Police Force has been found wanting in regards to maintaining civil order and supporting the Fiji Government. During any event of civil turmoil, a nation's police force should be the first instrument of national power to support the will of the government and the maintenance of civil order. During the coup led by Speight in 2000, the Fiji Police force was found to be lacking the ability to maintain civil order, and appeared to be powerless and uninterested in preventing unrest. The leadership of the Fiji Police appeared to be supporting Speight's civil coup by failing to act against him. Even if the Fiji Police Force had been interested in supporting the Fiji Government during this period of civil unrest, it is unlikely they could have provided a viable response due to their lack of an adequately resourced counter-terrorism force. The impotence of the Fiji Police Force has served to exacerbate civil disorder in Fiji and has encouraged the RFMF into internal security roles through practical necessity.

It is of paramount importance that the Fiji Police Force develops into a legitimate, ethical and viable instrument of national power that is capable of maintaining basic levels of civil order. The Fiji Police Force requires to be led by an ethical and effective leader. As such,

the secondment of a team of policemen, led by a senior New Zealand (or Australian) policeman, could help guide the Fiji Police Force through a period of restructure. In the past, such a strategy has led to significant positive growth in the Fiji Police Force. An example of this was seen in Fiji, through the leadership of the Australian expatriate policeman Mr Hughes. However, Mr Hughes was forced out of Fiji, by Bainimarama following the last coup in December 2006.¹²

Enhancing the leadership of the Fiji Police Force would help facilitate its growth and legitimacy. However, the Fiji Police Force is currently also lacking in significant capability to deal with incidents of civil disorder. The Fiji Police Force is mainly constabulary based and does not have an adequate ability to provide an armed response to serious incidents of internal security, or even the capability to conduct basic riot control. The Fiji Police Force should develop a comprehensive capability to maintain basic civil order during periods of internal turmoil and violence, including the ability to effectively control low-level incidents of domestic terrorism and riots. The Fiji Police Force would require a highly trained, and adequately armed response unit capable of dealing with both armed insurgents and incidents of domestic terrorism. Such a force could be of sub-unit size (approximately 100 personnel) and trained, and equipped in such a manner as to be able to neutralise any incidents of insurgency, or domestic terrorism that it encounters. Such a force would effectively be a police counter terrorist organisation and would need to be armed accordingly. This force would require high entry and training standards and would almost certainly require the support of New Zealand (and Australia) in its establishment and training. Such a force would encourage the RFMF to focus on legitimate military tasks rather than on internal security. During the event of any serious

¹² Neal, D (interview with Green, M. 25 June 2011), 18 December 2012.

future internal security issues, it would be the Fiji Police that would resolve the issue, not the RFMF. The RFMF should only become involved in internal security measures in a supporting role to the Fiji Police Force.

Although this paper has identified the importance of enhancing the capability of the Fiji Police Force, it is a matter of irony that such a move may possibly serve to create more internal security issues in Fiji if not managed carefully. Given the past political involvement of the RFMF, should the Fiji Police Force raise a domestic counter-terrorism capability in Fiji, such a move may create a natural area of competition between the two organisations. The RFMF and the Fiji Police Force have always maintained a healthy rivalry, and the establishment of a counter terrorism organisation by the Fiji Police Force may be seen as a threat by the RFMF. During a period of future political instability this situation could potentially develop into a confrontation between the RFMF and the Fiji Police Force. Although unlikely, the risk of such a situation is possible, particularly given the current state of democracy and the political alignment of the RFMF within Fiji. Such a scenario could be avoided by teaching both the RFMF and the Fiji Police Force to compliment one another rather than compete against one another. This relationship should be clearly articulated in the Fiji Constitution. The delineation of responsibility and provision of mutual support between the RFMF and Fiji Police Force must be emphasised to both organisations and the Fiji Government during the future re-engagement by New Zealand. The importance of the political neutrality of the RFMF must be emphasised while the Fiji Police Force ability to maintain internal security and civil order will allow the RFMF to better focus on authentic military outputs rather than governmental over-watch and internal security.

Economically, the New Zealand Government may decide to increase the amount of ODA that it currently provides Fiji. In following the preferred strategy of MFAT, such economic support could reflect a view to enhancing the standard of living in Fiji through building sustainable economic infrastructure rather than simply providing aid. New Zealand may also help better protect the economic resources of Fiji through the provision of surveillance and security assets to help reduce the incidents of resource exploitation, particularly in the maritime domain. Citizens of Fiji could also be provided opportunities to work in New Zealand as part of the Recognised Seasonal Employer Policy. Economic incentives potentially provided to Fiji by New Zealand and other democratic nations, could serve to encourage Fiji towards western diplomacy. Focussed and collaborative economic approaches between like minded western countries could potentially compete with Asian economic influences that have partially resulted from Bainimarama's 'Look North' policy. Conversely, a failure to engage economically with Fiji may serve to encourage Fiji's partial dependence on Chinese 'soft loan' facilities.

This chapter has detailed New Zealand's preferred suggested strategic endgame and has provided some options open to New Zealand regarding future strategic policy for Fiji. Firstly, it is essential that New Zealand should not resume full political involvement with the Fiji Interim Government until the former has irreversibly committed to holding democratic elections. Secondly, New Zealand would be well served to initiate a multi-lateral approach to supporting the Fiji elections, possibly through a medium such as the Pacific Islands Forum. Once the elections have occurred, and a duly elected democratic government is in power within Fiji, the Fiji Constitution may have to be revisited and re-drafted, preferably by a neutral external body such as the United Nations. Prior to this is occurring, a senior New Zealand diplomatic could be reinstated in Fiji as well as a senior

officer of the NZDF, to act as a Defence Attaché'. From this point on, a comprehensive programme of support and interaction could be initiated between the NZDF and the RFMF. A programme involving the enhancement of leadership and capability within the Fiji Police Force could also be initiated. Senior representatives of the Methodist Church of New Zealand could be utilised to mentor their counterparts within the Methodist Church of Fiji towards a path of political neutrality. Any restrictive economic sanctions imposed by New Zealand against Fiji should also be lifted.

The above mentioned model can be described as a comprehensive, whole of government approach to mitigating the political issues within Fiji with some degree of finality. Use of a comprehensive approach that includes the prudent application of all instruments of national power may result in a greater opportunity to achieve New Zealand's desired governmental strategic endgame. Although this approach may seem resource intensive from New Zealand's point of view, it is certain that Australia would also provide support to help restore sustainable democracy in Fiji. Given the potential breadth of involvement from the government, military, police and church from within New Zealand (and Australia), such support could be met by New Zealand without overt difficulty.

It is essential that the future democratic government of Fiji is developed into an ethical and effective organisation. The Fiji Police Force must be effective at maintaining civil order, and capable of neutralising any forms of internal insecurity or acts of domestic terrorism. The RFMF must be encouraged into a form of political neutrality and the Methodist Church must also remove itself from any political involvement or comment. The Fiji economy should be enhanced to the point where none of its citizens are forced to live below the established poverty line. Such a goal of effective democracy, governance and

civil order in Fiji may take some decades to achieve. However, given that Fiji is within New Zealand's strategic area of interest, the importance of a prosperous, stable, democratic and friendly Fiji is of utmost important.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the thesis was to provide an analysis of the causes and effects of civil disorder and internal insecurity within Fiji. By understanding these influences, and New Zealand's desired strategic endgame in regards to the future of Fiji, an argument has been developed for strategic policy that New Zealand may pursue in regards to future interface with Fiji. Throughout the thesis, the role and conduct of the RFMF has remained central to the argument. This focus reflects the key role that the RFMF have played in the various coups and mutiny that have occurred in Fiji since 1987, and also reflects the current militarization of the long-standing Fiji Interim Government. Therefore, the RFMF will form a key part of the solution in achieving New Zealand's desired strategic endgame regarding Fiji.

Fiji is of direct strategic concern to New Zealand, and as a large nation state in the South Pacific, helps to set the tone for regional stability. Fiji is situated within New Zealand's strategic area of interest, with the distance between the two nations being only 2000 kilometres. Fiji occupies an important geographic space within the South Pacific and sits astride New Zealand's main maritime lines of communication, maintains a deep water harbour located at Suva, and several airfields capable of receiving international air traffic. Fiji is a valuable economic, logistic and political hub for the region. Fiji is also host to a significant international cable communications node that is directly linked to New Zealand; and this communication medium requires security. Any factors regarding deterioration of the level of the Fiji economy, civil rights, crime, civil order or security have the potential to directly affect New Zealand.

New Zealand is a maritime trading nation, and Fiji sits in a geographic location astride New Zealand's sea lines of communication. From a strategic point of view, it is essential

for New Zealand's future survival that these sea lines of communication remain open and viable. The subject of maritime security may be regarded by some analysts as a matter to take for granted. However, New Zealand's maritime security and the maintenance of secure sea lines of communication have twice been compromised within the last century, during both the First World War and the Second World War. Given current rising military tensions in the Asia-Pacific region, the prospect of future armed conflict in the South Pacific is possible. Should the Asia-Pacific region be host to a significant future conflict, it is vital for the security of New Zealand and Australia that Fiji remains in friendly hands.

Since Fiji's last coup in December 2006, the New Zealand government has at times been alarmed regarding the level of governance, security and civil order in Fiji. Should the security situation in Fiji ever deteriorate to a chaotic degree, New Zealand and Australia may be expected to resolve these issues in isolation from other larger nations. This is due to the fact that larger international powers such as the US may have more pressing security issues to deal with and would prefer that New Zealand and Australia resolve any potential regional security issues in the South Pacific. It is in New Zealand's best interests that the future of Fiji is that of a prosperous, stable and friendly democracy.

Fiji's has a population of approximately 875,983 people and is divided into two main ethnic groups; indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijian. Historical tensions between these two ethnic groups have over time, significantly contributed to problems regarding civil order in Fiji. However, it is possible to overstate racial problems in Fiji as a means to simplify the continued cycle of coups that have occurred. Other problems contributing towards the cycle of coups have included political motivations, the pursuit of financial wealth, indigenous inter-tribal rivalry, and matters relating to the avoidance of judicial

responsibility. Never the less, the poor state of race relations within Fiji has contributed to civil disorder. Until Fiji can reconcile differences between the two main ethnic groups, its transformation into a mature democracy will be difficult to complete. Both indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians need to put aside past grievances and build a racially tolerant society.

The RFMF provides a sizable military force within New Zealand's strategic area of interest. However, the isolation of Fiji under Bainimarama's regime has caused the NZDF to sever ties with the RFMF in reflecting the political will of the New Zealand Government. Given the isolation of the RFMF from the NZDF, the professional affiliation once maintained between personnel within the two organisations will soon be lost. This situation of professional alienation may prove to be difficult to restore if the relationship between New Zealand and Fiji is not repaired soon. It is hoped that once democracy has been restored in Fiji, the NZDF and RFMF can once again build a strong military relationship. Given the positive history shared between the NZDF and the RFMF, rebuilding a relationship between the military forces of the two nations may prove to be a particularly valuable part of the future strategic policy pursued by the New Zealand Government.

The indigenous Fiji warrior culture promotes a situation where members of the RFMF are inclined to take an active interest in politics. This is due to the fact that the warrior holds a paramount position in Fiji society and prefers to maintain political influence. In contemporary Fiji, being a uniformed member of the RFMF reflects this approach, and the RFMF will always maintain a prestigious place in Fiji society. Many members of the RFMF hold the opinion that it is their right to take an active part in internal affairs and

acceptable that the RFMF is utilised as a power-broker within Fiji politics. This culture of militarism within Fiji politics has become a well established fact since the first military coup of 1987. The role of the military must be retained within its proper orbit. It must be a neutral instrument of the state with its core task being the defence of Fiji against external threats. The military is an instrument of national power, not an authority in its own right. The RFMF must abstain from political intervention and remain subservient to parliament.

The future capability and conduct of the RFMF will be linked to the future success of democracy in Fiji. For Fiji to ever return to a sustainable and authentic democracy, it is essential that the RFMF remains politically neutral. This factor is one of the most important facets of the overall argument. Unfortunately however, given the series of coups that have occurred in Fiji since 1987, this goal may take decades to achieve.

Although the RFMF has repeatedly fallen from grace, this organisation is not yet a radical organisation. The RFMF has a proud history and normally maintains an effective chain of command. The re-establishment of an effective and legitimate military force within Fiji is possible given time, support, and resources. Once political ties are re-established within Fiji then the RFMF will require substantial support as detailed in Chapter 8 of the thesis. However, the failure of New Zealand to re-engage and support the RFMF may risk this military organisation in possibly developing into a radical element.

Despite any concerns regarding the current capability maintained by the RFMF, it is still the third largest military force in the South Pacific, and maintains a substantial light infantry based capability. The RFMF consists of approximately 3,500 regular force personnel and some 10,000 territorial force personnel. The vast majority of personnel

serving in the RFMF have experienced active duty on live operations, albeit these deployments have mainly consisted of Peace Support Operations. In the event of any future incidents involving internal security problems in Fiji - New Zealand or Australia should never consider intervention without express invitation of both the Fiji Government and the RFMF. Any potential uninvited external military intervention (including an SPE of naturalised citizens), would likely be viewed as a breach of sovereignty by the RFMF and would be treated accordingly, with armed force. Any risk of potential confrontation between the RFMF and an opposing force on Fiji territory should be avoided, as it would likely result in extensive casualties.

Despite justified criticism of the RFMF, the Fiji Police Force has proven itself incapable of maintaining civil order. This situation has encouraged the RFMF to repeatedly become directly involved in matters involving internal security. During the coup and mutiny of 2000 led Speight, it was the RFMF who maintained civil order within Fiji. It is essential that the Fiji Police Force is strengthened to the point where they are capable of dealing with all matters of civil disorder and internal security, including domestic terrorism, to the point whereby they can control civil order, security and acts of terrorism without intervention required from the RFMF.

The analysis of indigenous Fiji culture also identified the church like the military, maintains a central and paramount position within Fiji society. The Methodist Church of Fiji has strayed from the accepted norm of political neutrality and has made the mistake of delving into politics. There is evidence to suggest that senior members of the Methodist Church of Fiji actively campaigned from the pulpit in support of a nationalist political uprising within Fiji and supported members of the RFMF during the coups conducted over

the past 25 years. It is essential that in future, the Methodist Church of Fiji refrain from any form of political involvement.

Analysis was conducted regarding a series of strategic documents released by Bainimarama. These documents indicated a wish to review the Fiji Constitution in 2013, with a planned democratic election in 2014. Bainimarama also gave strategic direction regarding the future of the RFMF. While these documents were coherent, some were unrealistic. It is also apparent that some of Bainimarama's goals for the RFMF have fallen well behind schedule. While it does now appear genuine that Bainimarama plans to hold democratic elections in Fiji during 2014, his legacy constitution, and politically powerful RFMF, may be a future threat to democracy in Fiji. It also appears that Bainimarama's strategic endgame may include a politically influential RFMF and a nation that is more closely aligned to Asia than to Australasia. Once democracy returns to Fiji, Bainimarama's constitution, and the role of the RFMF may have to be reviewed, and Fiji should be encouraged back into a close relationship with the Australasian powers.

The cycle of coups and civil disorder that have occurred in Fiji since 1987 has significantly degraded the economy of Fiji. This factor has negatively affected the standard of living among the population of Fiji. Poor levels of governance and on-going problems with civil disorder have served to further degrade the situation. For the majority of Fiji's citizens, until levels of civil order and governance in Fiji are enhanced, social and economic indicators are likely to remain at low levels. Once full governmental contacts are re-established between New Zealand and Fiji, increased levels of economic support and financial incentives should be provided to Fiji. It is hoped that such economic incentives

may assist in competing against some Asian financial influences, particularly those represented by China's 'soft loan' facility.

Poor levels of governance and civil order have also served to encourage an environment where trans-national crime and resource exploitation have become common within Fiji. The poor level of governance, policing and civil order have made it easier for proponents of trans-national crime and illegal resource exploitation, to take advantage of the situation. This has involved criminal plans to increase illegal smuggling of narcotics to New Zealand and Australia. Fiji is also economically at risk, given its large EEZ and porous maritime border. In recent years, many other nations have illegally or unsustainably exploited economic resources within Fiji's EEZ. Unsustainable harvesting of natural resources (particularly migratory fish species) within Fiji territory has the potential to create regional harm. As McCusker has described in the 'cycle of cumulative impact,' degraded levels of civil order and governance may serve to exacerbate and further degrade the overall crime-rate, security situation, standard of living, and economy. The degradation of governance and civil order in Fiji, can potentially adversely affect the South Pacific region.

The isolationist stance adopted by Bainimarama towards New Zealand has isolated the two nations, albeit this result also reflects the actions of the New Zealand Government. This is concerning given the fact that this void is quickly being filled by larger Asian nations under Bainimarama's 'Look North' policy, particularly China. Unless this situation is remedied soon, New Zealand faces the prospect of having a potentially radical and alienated RFMF more deeply embedded inside an isolated and non-democratic government. In the possible event of any future political, economic, climatic or military catastrophe in the Asia- Pacific region, New Zealand would be well served in having Fiji

led by an authentic and friendly democratic government and host to a robust and legitimate RFMF. Therefore, it is hoped that events leading up to and following, the 2014 Fiji general election will help to enhance the Fiji-New Zealand relationship.

Fiji's positioning in the South Pacific region firmly places the nation within New Zealand's strategic area of interest. Any issues regarding security, civil order or governance in Fiji will directly affect New Zealand. Adverse flow on effects may include resource degradation, an increase in trans-national crime and in extreme situations, concerns regarding regional security and stability in the South Pacific. New Zealand also has an ethical interest in ensuring that the citizens of Fiji enjoy a certain quality of life and are able to reside in a well governed, democratic nation.

Fiji is not a failed state however, it is a broken state. Bainimarama has not provided Fiji with an adequate level of governance and has further cemented the RFMF as the ultimate power broker within Fiji politics. However, despite the current illegitimacy of the Fiji Interim Government and the RFMF, New Zealand must accept that sooner rather than later, ties must be renewed in order that the bi-lateral relationship can be salvaged.

New Zealand must renew political and military links with Fiji, as with every passing year the rift between Fiji and New Zealand will continue to grow. Despite this fact, it must be cautioned that the New Zealand government should not fully engage with Bainimarama's regime until such point as the latter has convincingly demonstrated the will to return to democracy. Use of international institutions such as the Pacific Islands Forum or United Nations may assist New Zealand's policy of future engagement with Fiji. Once the intent to return to democracy in Fiji is irreversible, the New Zealand Government should rapidly

re-engage with Fiji, and NZDF support to the RFMF may form an important part of this strategy. Fiji is approaching a political cross road and it is hoped that its future direction is towards sustainable democracy, and a relationship that is close to the two Australasian powers.

New Zealand's desired strategic endgame includes a Fiji that is economically viable, democratic, stable and friendly. The future democratic Fiji Government will be supported by a strong and viable police force, while the RFMF will focus on external security requirements and remain politically neutral. This strategic endgame could be achieved via use of a comprehensive whole of government approach, utilising prudent application of all of the instruments of national power.

In closing, a series of questions are raised regarding the future of Fiji and Bainimarama. Fiji is planning to hold democratic general elections in September 2014. However, Fiji's successful transition to democracy has yet to be seen. The future direction of Fiji will be significantly influenced by the question of whether or not Bainimarama will remain as a key figure of either the future democratic government of Fiji, or the RFMF post September 2014.¹ While Bainimarama is carefully shaping the future of Fiji via the drafting of a new constitution and strategic vision for the RFMF, some of his strategic plans are already stalling (particularly in regards to the planned future of the RFMF). Should Bainimarama not be included as part of the Fiji Government or RFMF post September 2014, then his strategic visions and plans regarding the future may be radically changed by the new leadership of Fiji.

¹ Lal, V: Hunter, R, "Frank Bainimarama's Tiger and Fiji Election Prospects in 2014," *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, Vo 101, Issue 5, (2012), 463-465.

The planned general elections of 2014, if successful, will result in a series of strategic level decisions for the future government of Fiji that may raise the following questions:

- Will Fiji retain a priority on international engagement with the major Asian nations?
- Will Fiji be comfortable to renew strong political and military links with New Zealand and Australia?
- Will Fiji remain engaged with the Melanesian Spearhead Group?
- Will Fiji renew links with the Pacific Islands Forum or the Commonwealth?
- Will the future Democratic Government of Fiji produce a new Defence White Paper?
- To what extent will the RFMF be withdrawn from the future Fiji Government?
- Is the Fiji Constitution, currently being drafted under Bainimarama's leadership, likely to remain intact? Or will it be reviewed?
- Will Bainimarama remain a key figure within the future Fiji Government or the RFMF?
- Will Bainimarama's planned future vision for the RFMF remain a focus of the RFMF post September 2014?

It is difficult to address some of the above mentioned questions given the uncertain strategic future of Fiji. However, the next five years will be a decisive period in Fiji's history, and analysts of strategy and international relations will be eager to assess the future strategic direction that Fiji takes from September 2014.

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