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# **The Factors and Causes For The Failure of States In The South Pacific**

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## **Introduction**

The modern notion of the state has had a difficult time in permeating the South Pacific. The problem is that the tiny South Pacific communities are in many ways simply too small to act as states in the traditional sense. Where this combines with severe ethnic and economic problems it is a powder keg that can result in a state's failure. The Pacific is clearly the most important region in New Zealand's immediate area of direct strategic interest, as it is in that region that all of New Zealand's goods must flow to reach the lucrative markets of the world. It is also through this region that the threats to New Zealand must pass. These threats are not necessarily foreign military forces, but things which can indirectly pose a threat to New Zealand's sovereignty such as the detrimental influence of the drugs trade on our society, the proximity of vulnerable economies to organised crime cartels and the risks, and problems associated with displaced persons forced from their Pacific homes in the wake of a state's collapse. A state's failure in New Zealand's area of direct strategic interest would pose a significant threat to New Zealand's territorial and economic security. To preserve New Zealand's sovereignty and to assist in protecting those within our area of strategic interest, New Zealand needs to be able to recognise those factors which can trigger a substantial failure within a state. An economically vulnerable state can be just a bigger threat to New Zealand as a violently imploding one.

To understand and predict the possible outcomes for states in the South Pacific the idea of the state must be first understood. The inception of the modern state following the Treaty of Westphalia is a good place to start. Issues of sovereignty and ethnicity need

to be considered when examining the state but despite these major issues the definition of a state can always be linked back to the ability of the controlling entity to exercise a monopoly of violence over its subjects. This forms the basis of the definition of the state and as an indicator used to determine if a state is failing or not. Though the monopoly of violence is a good indicator it is not the cause. There must be a number of factors that allow a state's controlling entity to lose control. These factors lead to a competition between groups that want to gain the ability to exercise a monopoly of violence over the state. The result of this competition is civil war, instability and ultimately the complete collapse of the societal and economic structure of the state.

The factors which cause this can be broken into three broad groups: economic, demographic and societal. This thesis will look at three Pacific island states that are suffering in different ways based on the above three main areas. Firstly, Fiji is important in Pacific affairs as it is one of the largest Pacific island states and the largest of New Zealand's neighbours, aside from Australia, yet its society is polarised between two ethnic groups which are imposed on a tribal structure that has found its way into the legislation of the country. Fiji's problems are fundamentally demographic which has led to economic difficulties and heightened problems within the structure of society. The second country is the Solomon Islands, a poor state barely able to hold itself together. The Solomons' main problem is economic which has heightened demographic problems, which has in turn led to a breakdown in the societal structure. The implosion of the Solomon Islands makes it the largest Pacific security risk to New Zealand and Australia, as conditions are rife for illegal arms and drugs smuggling as well as the associated issues of displaced persons and illegal immigration. The last state to review is Tonga, which

through its community structure, mostly related to its demography, is constrained in its economic development leaving the country still heavily reliant on subsistence production leading to demographic problems as the states' population grows. This thesis will show that the three main factors leading towards an implosion are interrelated and the compounding consequences of one factor stimulate difficulties in the other areas. Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Tonga are cases that provide different examples of the working of this process.