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## **Conflict, Violence and Development in the Southwest Pacific:**

Taking the Indigenous Context Seriously

**Manuhuia Barcham**



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Taking the Indigenous Context Seriously

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## Abstract

This article addresses two main issues. The first of these issues is the ongoing conflation of conflict with violence, and the lack of recognition of conflict as a potentially positive force. The second of these issues is the continued push by donors in the region towards the reconstruction of the state in a stronger form, despite recognition that the structures of the state have played a critical role in the emergence of the recent and ongoing violence in the region. In addressing these issues the article first explores the differentiation between the concepts of conflict and violence, before then engaging in a discussion of the ways in which conflict can not only be a positive force but may actually be constitutive of society itself. The article then looks at ways in which the state has acted to both catalyse and intensify destructive forms of conflict. Once these two issues have been addressed the article then moves on to explore the ways in which an awareness of these issues can be harnessed, by both donors and local communities working together in a form of constructive engagement, in the creation of more durable and effective forms of governance in the region.

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## Biographical Note

Manuhuia Barcham is Director of the Centre for Indigenous Governance and Development (CIGAD) at Massey University.

## Introduction

This article addresses two main issues. The first of these issues is the ongoing conflation of conflict with violence, and the lack of recognition of conflict as a potentially positive force. The second of these issues is the continued push by donors in the region towards the reconstruction of the state in a stronger form, despite recognition that the structures of the state have played a critical role in the emergence of the recent and ongoing violence in the region. In addressing these issues the article first explores the differentiation between the concepts of conflict and violence, before then engaging in a discussion of the ways in which conflict can not only be a positive force but may actually be constitutive of society itself. The article then looks at ways in which the state has acted to both catalyse and intensify destructive forms of conflict. Once these two issues have been addressed the article then moves on to explore the ways in which an awareness of these issues can be harnessed, by both donors and local communities working together in a form of constructive engagement, in the creation of more durable and effective forms of governance in the region.

## Differentiating between conflict and violence

Conflict is almost ubiquitous across all human social forms. (Nader and Todd 1978) So too for violence. Yet it is a mistake to conflate the two. While violence is always a negative phenomenon the same is not true for conflict.<sup>1</sup> Conflict can be a positive force. For, as Marc Ross (1993) has argued, "conflict itself...is not necessarily a bad thing nor something we can eradicate; rather, the problem is ineffective conflict management with resulting high social and human costs." (p. xi)

In Melanesia in general, and Papua New Guinea in particular, the relationship between conflict and development has generally been described in terms of the issue of 'law and order'.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately the dichotomy set up by this distinction has helped continue the false perception of conflict as a purely negative phenomenon – counterposing the disruption of conflict with the order and peace of the law. This is a mistake, as to portray all conflict as negative is to throw the proverbial baby out with the bath water – especially in regions of the globe where, for some, conflict is actually constitutive of the self.

One of the few areas in which conflict has been viewed constructively has been in the field of conflict mediation. For the last fifty years mediators have thus been increasingly influenced by the idea that conflict can actually have positive effects. (Harrington and Merry 1988, pp. 715-716) However, as Morgan Brigg (2003) has argued, while "such reformist orientations suggest a positive approach towards conflict", conflict – and so too disputes as specific manifestations of conflict – are nonetheless still viewed "as blockages to be overcome, as difficult events to move beyond." (p. 289) Whilst seen as a potentially positive force conflict is still nonetheless perceived as something to be eliminated in the end. Criticising the ethnocentric conception of conflict underlying this idea Brigg then goes on to argue that in this perspective it is thus:

"only when conflict has been to some extent dispensed with and peace restored that conflict is considered positive. Hence while mediation values engagement with conflict, this is so in order to achieve peace; conflict is thus subordinated to peace." (Brigg 2003, p. 289)

This conception of conflict is troublesome for a number of reasons, not least of which being the homogenising assumptions which underlie its construction.<sup>3</sup> For, as Brigg (2003) himself goes on to show in the same article, "within cultures in which interpersonal ties predominate" and selfhood and subjectivity are not necessarily skin-bound "disputing or fighting between individuals may not signal the breaking of social bonds but rather their assertion."<sup>4</sup> (pp. 290-291)

The case of the Wiradjuri people of New South Wales in Australia is a classic case of this point.<sup>5</sup> For the Wiradjuri – where interpersonal bonds are central in the construction of not only society but self – a verbal insult by another can represent a challenge to one's very existence as a social being. To not respond, to not fight back, is not an option, as one's integrity as an individual does not exist beyond the bonds of sociality. Only through responding through conflict can the individual qua individual survive as conflict "leads to social involvement" and hence the continued existence of self. (Macdonald 1990, p. 131) Similarly, Alan Rumsey (2003) has argued that, in relation to the Western 'Hobbesian' ideal of the "asocial 'individual' as given in nature, and of 'society' as an artificial system of 'control' which is subject to breakdown when people come into conflict with each other", that Papua New Guinea Highlands social order is one in which "the basic condition of humanity is taken to be one of mutual engagement, and where amity and violent hostility are taken to be equally normal forms of it." (p. 81) Community and conflict are thus not necessarily antithetical to one another and may actually be constitutive of one another.<sup>6</sup> (Rumsey 2003, p. 74)

However, while there is a vast anthropological literature concerning this issue, there has been very little uptake of these ideas by bilateral and multi-lateral donors in the construction of their post-conflict development programming in the region. Instead they have tended to avoid the difficult but necessary issues of context and have instead focused on the issue of eliminating conflict. This approach to the issue of conflict and development is problematic, not least of all because, as Laurence Goldman (2003) has recently argued that "for indigenes, governments and developers in Papua New Guinea (PNG), the idea of a 'community without conflict' may be an objective which is neither socially imaginable nor even desired." (p. 1)

In approaching the issue of conflict and development we thus need to ensure that we take the issue of cultural difference, and so too cross-cultural conceptions of conflict, seriously. This is not say that conflict is never a problem. It frequently is. And, it is one of the most pressing problems facing the continued development of the Pacific region. The point, however, is that if effective government and sustainable development is to be achieved in the region then there is a need for bilateral and multi-lateral donors to recognise that conflict is not necessarily a destructive force. Once this has been achieved, then this opens the way for discussions to occur as to how conflict may be successfully dealt with.



The focus of developmental programming should thus not be on preventing conflict per se but rather on the very different goal of preventing conflict from degenerating into harmful violence. In achieving this goal there are number of tasks which need first to be achieved. The first, the realisation that conflict can be a constructive and even constitutive force has already been discussed. The second key task is an exploration of the way in which structural factors, including the state, have not only created possibilities for the emergence of newly destructive forms of conflict but have also exacerbated older, previously more benign forms of conflict. While conflict is often about threatened identities and divergent interests (Ross 1993, 1993a), this conflict can be intensified or indeed catalysed by structural factors – and in the case of the Pacific this role has often been played by the state.

## Structural violence: the state as a site of conflict

All groups possess mechanisms for dealing with conflict. Thus the peoples of the Southwest Pacific possessed a variety of customary approaches for mediating conflict. However, with the imposition of the administrative structures of the state through the process of colonisation these conflict-mediation mechanisms were often disrupted or modified and the new structures of the state presented opportunities for the emergence of newer and more destructive forms of conflict. These changes took three main forms.

- Traditional conflict mechanisms were no longer valued (for various reasons) or were seen as backward – either by the state or by the people themselves – and were either explicitly forbidden or simply abandoned;
- The structures of the state provided a source of previously unimaginable power and wealth and so provided opportunities for the creation of new sources of conflict; and
- The structures of the state acted to magnify traditional sources of conflict so as to make them unmanageable through traditional conflict mediation mechanisms.

These last two points were often connected to the activities of elites who exploited these opportunities in pursuit of their own interests. This is not to say, however, that older systems of conflict-mediation did not survive – rather, it is to say that in order to survive these older systems generally operated in a hybrid manner in concert with the hegemonic power of the state. (Weisbrot 1982)

This identification of the state as a source and catalyst of conflict is not new. In their edited collection *War in the Tribal Zone*, Ferguson and Whitehead (1999) argued that indigenous warfare was “generally transformed, frequently intensified, and sometimes generated” in the wake of contact with the West and the imposition of the Western state system.<sup>7</sup> (p. xii) Andrew Strathern’s contribution to the collection provides ample evidence of how, after an initial period of pacification, warfare in the Western Highlands province of Papua New Guinea returned with a vengeance in the later post-colonial period. Strathern (1999) demonstrates in his piece how the structures of the state have – through the widening of spheres of political competition and the growth of business

competition – actually intensified the forms of violence apparent in this region. (pp. 234-240) In a similar vein, as early as 1977, a mere two years after its independence, Mervyn Meggitt (1977) argued that violence amongst the Mae-Enga of Papua New Guinea was a direct result of the failure of state administrative procedures for the management of land disputes.<sup>8</sup> And, in a recent paper, Judith Bennett (2002) has traced the roots of the recent violence in the Solomon Islands back to the structures of the colonial and post-colonial state.

The problem is, while many are cognisant of the role that the state plays in this process, it does not seem to have made any discernible impact on development programming. For example, the UNDP (2004) has acknowledged in a recent report that the structures of the Solomon Island state itself contributed to the emergence of the destructive conflict and violence of the last six years. (pp. 1-2) However, despite this realisation the same report nonetheless argues that the solution to the problem is dependent, in part at least, on the rebuilding of the Solomon Islands state – in a stronger form. (UNDP 2004, p. 3) One wonders though, if it was the structures of the state that led, in part at least, to the initiation of violence, why should they be seen as part of the solution?

The answer is that for the majority of the region's bilateral and multi-lateral donors their developmental thinking is dependent on the outmoded belief that – in true Rostowian fashion – all that is required for development (or 'take-off' – to continue the Rostowian theme) to occur is for 'developing peoples' to adopt modern Western institutional structures and norms of activity. Once this is achieved and 'they' think and act as 'we' do then development would be the inevitable outcome.

In a recent discussion of a similar point Marina Ottaway (2003) has described the emergence of a democratic reconstruction model which she argues is "now routinely prescribed by the international community as a means of building a durable peace in postconflict societies." (p. 314) She goes on, however, to criticise this model arguing that "while appealing in theory, [it] is proving very difficult and very costly in practice." (Ottaway 2003, p. 315) Ottaway (2003) based her criticism on the fact that the postconflict countries in question "simply did not have the resources to do what they were supposed to do and the international community offered little help in devising realistic strategies for scaling down and sequencing the reforms, and devising a plan of action commensurate with each country's ability to implement." (p. 317)

Ottaway (2003) then offers two possible solutions to this problem. The first, and the "one that would be less foreign to current thinking and practices, would simply be to scale down the present model." (Ottaway 2003, p. 321) Ottaway (2003) then goes on to argue, however, that there is a second, and "more drastic option open to the international community...[but that it would] require a major readjustment on the part of both international institutions and bilateral donors". (p. 321) The second option is, in her words:

"to accept that there are countries – or perhaps more accurately territories – where the international community cannot reconstruct a modern state, let alone a modern state that is even minimally democratic. In such

territories, the international community needs to abandon the social engineering approach, wait and watch, and try to understand what political systems are being recreated by the people involved. And then it must seek ways to establish links to these emerging systems, even if they seem archaic, and to provide some support." (Ottaway 2003, p. 321)

I do not agree with Ottaway's generally pessimistic belief that the only options available to the international community are to do less or to let them fight it out to the bitter end. There are other options available to the international community and it is in Ottaway's own writing that the kernel of this new approach can be found.

Now while Ottaway's call for a reduced developmental load for post-conflict states is, at first glance a slightly different argument from the UNDP argument presented above, they nonetheless share the same underlying end goal; the matching of the capabilities of the state to its tasks with the belief that over time the strengthening of the capacities of the state will help it resist capture by society. One of the possibilities implicit within Ottaway's argument, but not pursued by her, is the idea that the structures of the state, or at least how we commonly understand them, are not necessarily the best option to achieve effective government and development in certain parts of the world.

The problem is that Ottaway, like many writing on development issues, continues to work within a framework of Western thought that denies the coevalness of much of humanity – whilst nonetheless denying its difference. (Fabian 2002) Moving beyond this perspective – which continues to view the Western state as constituting the 'end of development' – depends, in part at least, on the realisation that there are other forms of governmental structure that are just as valid, or even more valid than the structures of the Western administrative state. For, if the state, acting as a catalyst, has led to the emergence of destructive forms of conflict and violence then rebuilding the state stronger – but no different in any substantive sense – may just open things up again for another cycle of conflict, with the possibility that this renewed cycle of destructive violence would be proportional to the new strength of the state. And so, if the structures of the state led to the outbreak of destructive conflict in the first place, while the rebuilding of the original structures of the state in a stronger form is one possibility, another equally valid option would be the rebuilding of the structures of government in a different form.

This then links us back to the initial section of the paper and the realisation that conflict is not necessarily destructive, and in fact is something which is actually constitutive of some forms of sociality. Given that the structures of the state helped lead to the problems of violence that currently plague sections of the Southwest Pacific – and this is a fact that is acknowledged by both bilateral and multi-lateral donors in the region – if anything is to be taken away from this process it is surely to ensure that the same sort of structural problems do not emerge again.

Rather than rebuilding the structures of the state stronger than before, bilateral and multi-lateral donors might be better advised to take a longer term view and

adopt a more subtle approach based on rebuilding appropriate structures of government through a process of authentic mutual engagement with local populations. Whilst this form of long term engagement has been discussed at the highest levels of regional government, the challenge now is to match the rhetoric to the reality.<sup>9</sup>

## Where to from here?

The realisation that there is a need for the creation of structures of governance which will not only prevent a return to the structural violence described above but that will also take note of, and engage with, the view that conflict is not necessarily destructive and is, for some, something actually constitutive of sociality will require a two-tier process of rebuilding and reconstruction. This is a two-tier process due to the need to both engage with rebuilding at both the macro-institutional level as well as a need to work with indigenous local level communities in the region in order to help them move beyond the violence and trauma of recent years.

In terms of outlining how this process can proceed some of the work has already been done – as bi-lateral and multilateral donors are already cognisant of the role that the structures of the state have played in the emergence of violence and destructive conflict in the region. What is needed now is for these donors to constructively engage, in an authentic manner, with local communities in the region in order to map out how the reconstruction and rebuilding of effective modes of governance in the region is to occur. This work is made easier through the realisation that a vast body of literature already exists about these very processes discussed above – the challenge lies in utilising this data.

## Channeling conflict constructively

In terms of the double goal of:

- ensuring that conflict is channeled along constructive lines; and
- engaging seriously with the possible constitutive nature of conflict;

in the Southwest Pacific we must first accept that there is a need to work with local indigenous communities and individuals to help them move past the trauma and violence of the recent past. The most fruitful method for the achievement of this goal would appear to be through the processes and mechanisms of restorative justice. As there is a growing literature on the theory and practice of restorative justice in post-conflict situations, particular with respect to the cultures and peoples of the Southwest Pacific, I will not bore the reader with its exposition yet again.<sup>10</sup> Rather, what I would propose is that we need to be careful with the use of the term restorative.

I, for one, find the term restorative justice, with its implicit appeal for a return to a pre-conflict utopian state, somewhat ill-suited – especially given the arguments against this type of thinking outlined in the first part of this article. This is not to say, however, that I think that the methods and practices of restorative justice

processes are ill-suited to the needs of the communities of the Southwest Pacific (or elsewhere for that matter) – that is blatantly not the case. Rather, my concern is more one of semantics, although it is an important semantic distinction which needs to be made. The goal of these processes should thus not be restoration (with its cultural loading of a need to return to a pre-conflict state) but rather be reconciliation, that is, building relationships based on the recognition of what has gone before with the aim being to live together as a community, albeit not necessarily a conflict-free community. In fact to push for a conflict-free state would in fact be a form of violence on those societies and groups for whom conflict is a constitutive part of their sociality. I am not alone in raising this issue. In a recent paper, where he discussed the issue of restorative justice in the New Guinea Highlands, Alan Rumsey (2003) has thus called for a move away from restorative justice ideals – for the goal of these processes is not to return to some mythic peaceful utopianism but rather to transform an earlier state of affairs. (p. 89) Rumsey has thus suggested the use of the term transformative justice rather than the more culturally-loaded and potentially confusing term of restorative justice.

Recent reports and articles have suggested the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Solomon Islands. (UNDP 2004, p. 43) While this may go a long way towards healing the rifts within Solomon Islands society we have to be careful with the way in which such a commission might carry out its remit. In a recent paper Joseph Nevins (2003) has thus argued that reconciliation processes (Nevin focuses particularly on the role of Truth Commissions) have frequently achieved less than they necessarily could have due to their focus on individual violent acts or events rather than on systemic or structural forms of violence. (pp. 678-679) This blindness to structural issues echoes the concerns raised above about the negative impact structural forces can play on the creation and intensification of destructive forms of conflict. And so, if a Truth and Reconciliation Commission is to be established in Solomon Islands or elsewhere in the region, care must be taken that structural factors are taken into consideration in its deliberations.

The goal of this process of healing and reconciliation is not, it should be remembered, the eradication of conflict but rather a process of coming to terms with it. Conflict can be constitutive of relationships (although of course this is not necessarily the case) – and it is this relationship building that is at the heart of this process. In fact it was precisely this lack of engaged relationships that lay behind the recent violence in Solomon Islands. One of the key tasks facing those working in the region is thus the creation of an effective sense of civic belonging amongst the various peoples of the region in respect to their various countries.

## Building a public

In a recent paper Donovan Storey (2003) has brought attention to what Oxfam New Zealand have elsewhere called the problem of the 'missing middle' in modern Melanesia – the gap that exists between the local and the state. (p. 261) While Storey focuses on the urban situation, his ideas of an active citizenry – focused on citizenship as a partnership rather than a specific form of contractual relationship between the individual and the state – have much to offer the Pacific

in general in terms of the creation of appropriate forms of governmental structure. One of the key reasons behind the recent violence and conflict in the Southwest Pacific was the lack of a public – or single national society. The building of this form of civic sentiment is thus a key plank of any successful and effective program of reconstruction. The key to this, in part at least, will be a well functioning national education system. Again, these ideas are raised more clearly elsewhere and so I will not go into any more detail here. (see for example UNDP 2004, pp. 12-13) The point to be taken from this article though is that this form of civic or public sentiment is not necessarily one that will have to be built on a platform of peace. Rather it will probably be one contested heavily by many – but, if this article has shown anything, that is not necessarily a negative and in fact may be a positive move for all involved.

It is a myth that the formation of political community depends on sameness and consensus. (Mouffe, 1993; Honig, 1993; Nancy, 1991) The work done by countless anthropologists in the Southwest Pacific is testament to this fact. Community and conflict are not necessarily antithetical to one another. (Rumsey 2003, p. 74) Unfortunately the work of these theorists has made little impact on the developmental community. It should be noted, however, that, somewhat suprisingly to some, conflict can even be used in the construction of certain variants of the Western administrative state – although this is a fact that many tend to forget. Westminster parliamentary democracy is a form of government that is inherently conflictual, and, for many supporters of this form of government its conflictual nature is its very strength. The fact that one of the most stable forms of state structure in the world is based on conflict should do much to assuage the fears of those concerned that I am calling for nothing more than a form of governmental nihilism or a return to tradition. The key, however, is to match these institutions to their context and not to try to change the context to match the institution which is how things have tended to proceed to date.

## Rebuilding the state: taking context seriously

I am not suggesting that the ‘state’ should not be rebuilt in the Solomon Islands, or even that low state capacity was not one of the key reasons behind the recent and current violence in Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea – rather I am merely questioning the logic of rebuilding the state in the same form which had helped lead to this violence in the first place.<sup>11</sup> Good work has already begun to emerge following this line of thought. The recent UNDP report discussed above has many fine qualities, and a recent State, Society and Governance in Melanesia discussion paper entitled *Rebuilding State and Nation in Solomon Islands* addresses many of the issues addressed in this article. (UNDP, 2004; Hegarty *et al*, 2004) Again, the challenge lies in donors engaging in a meaningful way with the ideas contained within these various reports.

It should again be noted that I, and the authors of these other reports, are not arguing that what is required is a return to “governance by custom”. Rather, they and I are instead arguing for a process of reconstruction and rebuilding that takes indigenous concerns and the local context seriously and looks to link local processes with national concerns in a constructive manner. (Hegarty *et al* 2004, p. 4; UNDP 2004, p. 39) This will involve donors respecting the fact that possible

governance structures in the region might look very different from, or not conform to, Western ideals of what governance structures are 'supposed to look like.' However, as long as they are successful at achieving the goals they are meant to be achieving then this should not be a concern.

There is a large body of literature concerned with the way in which the normalising influence of the international state system acts to maintain the integrity of the system.<sup>12</sup> One of the results of this normalising process has been the creation in the developing world of what Robert Jackson (1990) has termed 'quasi-states' – states enfranchised by international society in order to allow numerous under-developed colonies to rapidly achieve independence. (pp. 21-25) Propped up and legitimised by other 'states' in the international regime these 'quasi-states' – of which Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands are classic examples – maintained an external aura of 'stateness' (due to their support by other 'states') while possessing very little in the way of internal coherence and capacity in relation to their domestic populations. The challenge then, is to resist the trap of once again constructing 'quasi-states' in the Southwest Pacific with all their attendant problems. The goal is the creation of effective and successful structures of government – call them states if you will – which are matched to the specific contextual issues and needs of their populations.

## Conclusion

This article has been concerned with the way in which conflict has been conflated with violence and how the potentially positive role of conflict has been effectively ignored or marginalised in developmental programming in the Pacific. The article has also focused on the need for the realisation that as the state itself played a critical role in the emergence of the recent and ongoing violence in the region it would be foolhardy to merely reconstruct the state as it was, only stronger. Unless the actual structures of the state are drastically rethought and modified in terms of both lessons learnt in the last twenty-five years, and in terms of the ongoing needs and concerns of the local indigenous communities, then there is a distinct possibility that these reconstructed states could easily collapse once more into the cycle of structural conflict that led to the emergence of destructive violence in the region in the first place. Once these concerns are addressed though, the way forward into the construction of durable and effective forms of governance in the region becomes clearer. The challenge is to constructively engage with what is distinctive about the region. If these issues are taken seriously by donors, and authentic engagement with local populations is achieved in the construction of appropriate forms of governance, then the future of the region will be much brighter.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The only legitimate form of violence would be that which occurred in self-defense. There is an expansive literature surrounding the issue of self-defense and violence. Rather than addressing this issue in any detail in this article the interested reader is directed to Tuck (1999) and Walzer (1984).

<sup>2</sup> See for example Clifford, Stuart and Morauta (1984), Gordon and Meggitt (1985) and Dinnen (2001).

<sup>3</sup> Thus Brigg (2003) argued that "following Western assumptions about conflict and disputing, conflict and violence are widely regarded as destructive practices and modes of subjectivity. Consistent with this, the implicit goal of mediation programs is the encouragement and production of peaceful, rational, and responsible subjectivities in preference and in a shift from conflictual, emotional and combative performances. Because of this outlook, mediation programs and processes often have difficulties recognising and respecting non-Western understandings and functions of conflict." (pp. 292-293)

<sup>4</sup> Brigg focuses on the case of Indigenous Australian communities, with some reference being made to similar work done in the Highlands in Papua New Guinea. There is a vast anthropological literature on different conceptions of self within the Pacific – but it is largely ignored by those working in the field of policy construction or development in the region.

<sup>5</sup> Brigg's himself uses this example of the Wiradjuri people and I owe him thanks for bringing this example to my attention in his writing.

<sup>6</sup> See for example Strathern (1988) for one of the more famous anthropological studies of this form of sociality.

<sup>7</sup> Ferguson and Whitehead (1999) were at pains, however, to point out that their proposition does not mean that indigenous peoples and groups existed in a benign, romantic state of nature. (p. xii)

<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that Meggitt also felt that severe population pressure was also a contributing factor in the emergence of this violence. So too, population pressure in Honiara was one of the key reasons behind the emergence of the recent violence in the Solomon Islands. However, if adequate conflict resolution mechanisms had been in place this violence may have been able to be prevented.

<sup>9</sup> The eighth section of the recent *Forum Declaration on Solomon Islands* signed at the 2003 meeting of the South Pacific Forum thus declared that Pacific "leaders acknowledged that recovery in the Solomon Islands would be a long-term task, extending beyond the restoration of law and order to economic and governance rehabilitation and reform."

<sup>10</sup> The reader interested in the theory and practice of Restorative Justice in the Southwest Pacific need look no further than the excellent edited collection entitled *A Kind of Mending: Restorative Justice in the Pacific Islands* edited by Sinclair Dinnen.

<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Sinclair Dinnen (2004) uses his paper entitled *Lending a Fist? Australia's New Interventionism in the Southwest Pacific* to highlight his concern about "the *state-centric character* of the assistance being offered" in the Southwest Pacific. (p. 3) Dinnen (2004) also argues that in dealing with the Southwest Pacific "greater appreciation is needed of the critical role of non-state and sub-national institutions in ordering the daily lives of most citizens. Appropriate and sustainable approaches to state building need to be grounded in the socio-political realities of these particular countries and no simply derived



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from global templates." (p. 3) Concerned with the inappropriateness of a generic state form for the Southwest Pacific Dinnen (2004) shares my concern that "to simply rebuild that which has ostensibly 'collapsed'...might simply be to invite 'failure' further down the track." (p. 6) I would recommend that the interested reader wanting to understand current issues about the role of the state in the Southwest Pacific would be well-served by reading Dinnen's piece in conjunction with this one.

<sup>12</sup> The authors of the 'English School' thus argue that the dominance of the European state system has forced other groups to take on the structures of the state in order to legitimate themselves. (Bull and Watson, 1984) See also Bartelson (2001).

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