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DECOLONISATION OF TOKELAU:  
WHY WAS THE PROPOSAL TO BECOME SELF-  
GOVERNING UNSUCCESSFUL IN THE 2006  
REFERENDUM?

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## Abstract

Tokelau is a Pacific Island country listed by the United Nations (UN) as a non-self-governing territory with New Zealand as its administering power. Tokelau continued to adhere to a preference for remaining a territory until 1994, when Tokelau's leadership unexpectedly declared a desire to explore its options for future self-government. A period of intensified programmes aimed at preparing Tokelau to become a self-determined nation under UN rules was initiated following the 1994 declaration. The process included reworking Tokelau's governance structure, constitutional development, and public sector capacity building. The decolonisation process culminated in February 2006 when a referendum was held in which Tokelauans voted on whether they wished Tokelau to become self-governing in free association with New Zealand. A two-thirds majority was required for the self-government proposal to pass. Only 60 per cent of the votes cast were in favour of becoming self-governing, so the proposal did not pass and there will be no immediate change to Tokelau's status. This thesis examines the factors that led to the referendum outcome.

Tokelau's decolonisation experience is explored in the context of the broader process of decolonisation in the South Pacific. Following a review of historical decolonisation processes and theories relating to these processes, Tokelauan people's explanations for the referendum outcome are outlined. The factors raised by participants in fieldwork interviews undertaken in Tokelau fall into three main themes – local divisions, lack of understanding of the concepts, and issues and doubt in Tokelau's readiness to self-govern. It is then explained how these three themes are all related to governance challenges currently being experienced in Tokelau, and how the linkages and interactions between the three themes combined led to self-government proposal being unsuccessful. A picture of the practical experience of decolonisation processes in Tokelau is thereby developed, which seeks to inform future consideration of appropriate decolonisation processes and the needs of Tokelau as it develops towards self-determination.

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## Abbreviations

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
MHT	Modern House of Tokelau
OCOG	Office of the Council for Ongoing Government
TPS	Tokelau Public Service
TALO	Tokelau Apia Liaison Office
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VSA	Volunteer Service Abroad

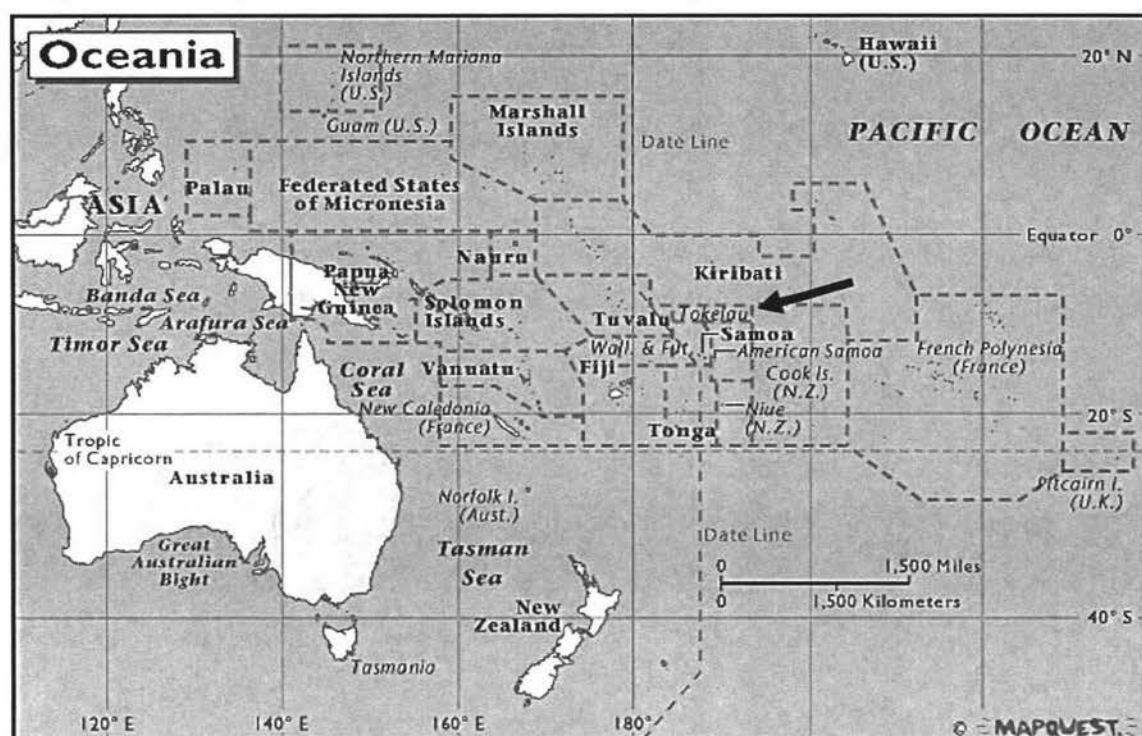
## Glossary of Tokelauan Terms

<i>atiakega</i>	development
<i>aumaga</i>	men's organisation
<i>faipule</i>	village head, leader of the <i>taupulega</i>
<i>fale</i>	house
<i>fatupaepae</i>	women's committee
<i>fono</i>	meeting
<i>matai</i>	head of extended family
<i>motu</i>	islet
<i>maopopo</i>	unity, togetherness
<i>nuku</i>	village
<i>palagi</i>	European
<i>pule</i>	authority
<i>pulenuku</i>	village mayor
<i>taupulega</i>	council of elders
<i>toeaina</i>	elder/s

Pronunciation note: in Tokelauan 'g' is pronounced 'ng', 'f' is pronounced as a soft 'wh' (almost 'h').

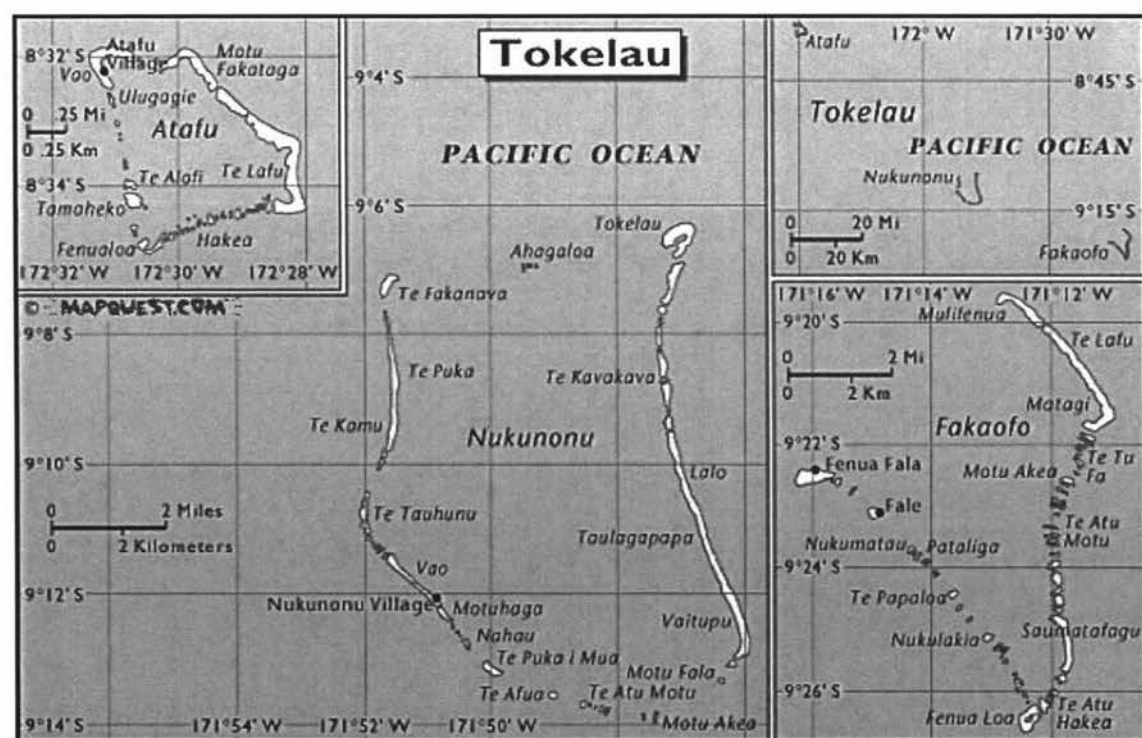
## Maps

*Map 1: The Pacific Islands (Tokelau indicated by arrow)*



Source: Retrieved on 30 January 2007 from <http://www.mapquest.com/atlas/?region=oceania>.

*Map 2: Tokelau*



Source: Retrieved on 30 January 2007 from <http://www.mapquest.com/atlas/?region=tokelau>.

# Chapter One: Introduction and Context

The South Pacific country of Tokelau is a non-self-governing territory under the administration of New Zealand. Tokelau was ruled by Britain from 1889 until responsibility for its administration was transferred to New Zealand in 1926 (Gasson, 2005:12). Tokelau is New Zealand's last colonial territory. Although the Cook Islands and Niue chose to become self-governing in free association with New Zealand in 1965 and 1974 respectively, Tokelau continued to express its preference to remain a territory until 1994, when Tokelau's leadership unexpectedly declared a desire to explore its options for future self-government (Angelo, 1997:8). Following the 1994 declaration, a period of intensified programmes aimed at preparing Tokelau to become a self-determined nation under UN rules began. This process culminated in February 2006 with the holding of a referendum on whether Tokelauans wished to become self-governing in free association with New Zealand. A two-thirds majority was required for the proposal to pass. However, with only 60 per cent of the votes cast in favour of becoming self-governing, there will be no change in the status quo in the immediate future (Government of Tokelau, 2006). For the time being Tokelau will remain a dependent territory of New Zealand. This thesis examines the reasons for the referendum outcome, which are found to fall into three themes: local divisions and rivalries, lack of understanding of the self-government proposal, and doubts among some Tokelauans about the territory's current capacity for self-government.

## **The research**

### ***Questions and objectives***

The central question of this thesis is: *Why was the proposal for Tokelau to become self-governing unsuccessful in the 2006 referendum?*

In order to investigate and answer this question, three research objectives were set:

1. To compare the formal decolonisation process in Tokelau with previous decolonisation processes in New Zealand territories;



2. To explore general attitudes towards self-government among Tokelauans living in the islands; and
3. To identify the factors that had an effect on the referendum outcome.

Three underlying research questions were derived from these objectives and formed the focus of the research:

1. Was there anything different about the formal decolonisation process in Tokelau, compared to other decolonisation processes undertaken by New Zealand, which may have affected the referendum outcome?
2. How do Tokelauans view the proposed change in status, and what are the reasons for these views?
3. What do Tokelauans consider to be the main factors behind the referendum outcome?

### ***Approach taken***

Investigation of the answers to the above questions was undertaken using both practical fieldwork and archival research, in addition to reviewing relevant literature. Tokelauan views of the factors that explain the referendum outcome were investigated during fieldwork interviews carried out by the author in Tokelau. Archival research using the files of the Tokelau Unit at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) was also undertaken. The information gained related to the New Zealand approach to and position on Tokelau's self-determination, recent events and issues in the decolonisation process, United Nations (UN) involvement in decolonisation in Tokelau, and New Zealand's previous decolonisation experiences in Samoa, the Cook Islands and Niue.

The literature reviewed covers the areas of colonialism, decolonisation, governance and development. Material on colonialism and decolonisation is included in order to define and give background on these processes that the referendum was a part of in Tokelau, and to place Tokelau's experience of decolonisation in an international and historical context. Information on governance and development is covered because all three of the themes mentioned above are reflections of governance problems in Tokelau that are similar to those experienced elsewhere in the South Pacific. Governance

problems in South Pacific and other developing countries also often relate to the legacies of colonialism and to the systems put in place during decolonisation.

### ***Structure of the thesis***

This thesis consists of six chapters. *Chapter One: Introduction and Context* illustrates the Tokelauan context, including the local geography, culture, history, economy, and governance structure. The third section highlights New Zealand's administration of Tokelau and the decolonisation process in Tokelau.

*Chapter Two: Decolonisation, Governance and Development* provides background information on colonial experiences and concepts of governance. General information and material specifically in relation to the Pacific is presented, which were obtained from a review of the relevant literature.

*Chapter Three: Research in Tokelau* discusses the methodology utilised in the fieldwork in detail and explores the overall experience of undertaking research in Tokelau, including barriers and limitations found in the process.

*Chapter Four: The Referendum* first outlines the arrangements made for the referendum and reports on how it operated in practice. Media and official reports from the time of the referendum are also considered. Chapter Four then presents detailed data, obtained during fieldwork interviews, on Tokelauans' views of the reasons underlying the referendum outcome.

*Chapter Five: Decolonisation and Governance in Tokelau* begins with comparison of the decolonisation experience in Tokelau with those in the Cook Islands and Niue. The ways in which the three main themes from the fieldwork data impacted on the outcome of the referendum are then examined.

*Chapter Six: Conclusion* summarises the context and history of decolonisation in Tokelau, responds to the three research objectives, and proposes an answer to the research question. This is followed by an outlook on some issues arising from the findings of this thesis that should be considered in planning future decolonisation processes in Tokelau.



## **Tokelau background**

### ***Geography and history***

Tokelau is made up of three tiny, low-lying coral atolls spread across 150 kilometres of the central Pacific Ocean approximately 500 kilometres north of Samoa (see Map 1 above). The three atolls Atafu, Nukunonu and Fakaofu (see Map 2 above) have a combined total land mass of around twelve square kilometres (Peat, 1984:13). Although, under Tokelauan tradition, Olosega or Swains Island was also part of Tokelau, that island was not included in Britain's original claim or inherited by New Zealand. The United States asserted sovereignty over Olosega in 1925, and in 1980 any claim to it by Tokelau and New Zealand was officially relinquished, in return for agreement from the United State agreeing to not also claim ownership of the other three atolls of Tokelau (Giese & Perez, 1983:139).

The land in Tokelau is only eight to ten feet (2.5 to 3.5 metres) above sea level (*Matagi Tokelau*, 1991:2). Due to its low-lying nature and its location in the Pacific cyclone belt, Tokelau is particularly vulnerable to damage from tropical cyclones, for example, as occurred during Cyclone Percy in February 2005. Each atoll is set on a coral base which rises steeply from the ocean depths. This means that there is no offshore anchorage available. The lagoons are surrounded by unbroken barrier reefs, with no deepwater channels through the reefs to the ocean (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:21). Tokelau's soils are composed mainly of coral debris and therefore have very low fertility and rain washes straight through the porous surface. Most areas, especially uninhabited *motu* (islets) but also parts of the villages, are covered in dense vegetation, mostly coconut palm plantations (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:21).

Traditionally, rights to most of Tokelau's very limited land were inherited by individuals and kin groups, although some communal land was recognised. The eldest son generally supervised the division and distribution of land to their brothers and sisters. The village leaders had no power to divide or give away property held by kin groups, unless in deciding a dispute. This system is maintained today under the Tokelau Islands Amendment Act 1967 which

provides that land in Tokelau be held “in accordance with the customs and usage of Tokelauan inhabitants” (Giese & Perez, 1983:132).

Each atoll has one village located on its western side, with one *motu* inhabited in Atafu and Nukunonu and two in Fakaofu. The western location provides sheltered access for fishermen to the ocean on the lee side of the atoll and leaving a downwind return trip across the lagoon from the coconut plantations (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:28). The villages are extremely isolated both from each other and internationally, due to their remote locations and to the lack of transport resources and infrastructure. Travel to and around Tokelau is only possible on the boat that sails fortnightly from Apia, Samoa; and it takes over 24 hours to reach Fakaofu, before making stops at the other villages and then returning to Apia.

Any approximation of the date of the first human settlement of the islands is not usually mentioned in literature about Tokelau. Tokelauans generally see people as having been “just there” from the beginning (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:127). However, there are several stories about the origins of Tokelauan people that point to Tokelau originally having been settled by two different peoples (MacGregor, 1937:12). Atafu, Nukunonu and Olosega were probably settled as part of a migration from Micronesia. Fakaofu was probably settled mainly from Samoa, but one story also gives the Cook Islands as the place of origin (Giese & Perez, 1983:132). Fakaofu eventually conquered the other two islands in the eighteenth century and resettled them with their own people (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:136).

The first Europeans to visit Tokelau came with the ship HMS Dolphin under Commodore John Byron in 1765. He sailed around Atafu and named it Duke of York’s Island (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:139). There was only sporadic European contact until 1841 when the United States Exploring Expedition recorded the first detailed account of Tokelau and named it the Union Group (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:140). From 1877 onwards Tokelau fell under the protection of Great Britain. In 1889 Britain officially annexed Tokelau with an eye to utilising the islands as a staging point for a trans-Pacific cable. The

Union Islands, as Tokelau was then known, was administered first from Western Samoa before being included within the Gilbert and Ellice Islands colony (now Kiribati and Tuvalu) from 1916 (Giese & Perez, 1983:132). In 1926 Tokelau was transferred to the control of the Governor-General of New Zealand, who delegated the administrative powers to the New Zealand Administrator of Western Samoa (Giese & Perez, 1983:133).

### ***People and culture***

It is difficult to form a clear picture of population statistics and trends in Tokelau. The most recent official data, from the 2006 Tokelau census, puts the usually resident population of the territory at 1,446. This number includes those who were present on census night and those who were deemed usually resident but temporarily absent from Tokelau for reasons such as education, health care, and official duties as employees of the Tokelau office in Apia (Kelekolio, 2006:ix). The 2001 census estimated Tokelau's population to be 1,515, but only counted those present in Tokelau on census night and those working in the Apia office and their families (Hooper, 2007). Using this same calculation on the 2006 census data would mean Tokelau's current population was only 1,107 (Kelekolio, 2006:ix), which would represent a large decline. For the previous fifteen years, since the 1991 census, the population of the atolls had been steady at around 1,500, but the changes in the counting system mean that comparison across years is not technically possible (Kelekolio, 2006:vii). From the October 2006 census data, Atafu is the largest village with a population of 524, Fakaofu was next with 483, and Nukunonu had 426 (Kelekolio, 2006:6). Males and females make up almost exactly half of the Tokelau population each, with 50.2 per cent male and 49.8 per cent female (Kelekolio, 2006:6). The population is quite young, with approximately 47 per cent of residents of the islands under 20 years of age (Kelekolio, 2006:1).

The indigenous language of Tokelau is a synthesis of two Polynesian dialects which correspond with dialects spoken in Tuvalu and the northern Cook Islands. The Tokelauan culture also shows close similarities with Tuvalu and the northern Cook Islands, but also incorporates some Micronesian traits and a more recent Samoan influence (Giese & Perez, 1983:132). Despite a common

language and shared social elements, Tokelau's three villages are seen as distinct from each other. Tokelau, from a Tokelauan point of view, was never one entity which differentiated into three; it was three from the beginning. In historical stories, Tokelau started out as three villages that fought each other, with Fakaofu conquering the other two, driving off all their inhabitants and resettling them (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:5). People today still tend to identify most strongly as being of their village and only secondarily as being Tokelauan.

The concept of *maopopo* is one example of what anthropologists Judith Huntsman and Antony Hooper call the 'precepts of village life' (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:40) that are central to Tokelau's culture. *Maopopo* is a Tokelauan term that means 'togetherness' or 'unity of purpose' (Hooper, 2007:24). Acting in ways that express togetherness is very important both in village activities and events such as dancing competitions and cricket games and in formal decision making. The success of a *fono* (meeting) is seen as whether *maopopo* is achieved. Taking a vote would threaten such an outcome, and often Tokelauans would rather postpone or delay a decision than run this risk (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:41).

There is little stratification in Tokelau society (Giese & Perez, 1983:133). Age is the main basis for differentiation in the villages, with the oldest being at the top of the hierarchy and having responsibility for the welfare of the village and authority due to their experience and knowledge gained over time (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:46). The relationship of command, compliance and respect between younger people and their elders is clear, and it is "almost impossible to elicit any information from a younger person if older ones are present" although it is "privately acknowledged that age does not necessarily equal wisdom in individual cases" (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:46).

Churches are very important and influential institutions in Tokelau. Church attendance is generally expected every Sunday, the Sabbath is strictly observed and church officers are held in high regard (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:96). Christianity was first introduced in the mid 1800s by Samoan 'native teachers'

from the French Catholic Mission and the Protestant London Missionary Society (LMS). By 1863 Atafu was Christianised by the LMS, Nukunonu was entirely Catholic, and both missions were established on Fakaofu (Giese & Perez, 1983:132). Today 62 per cent of Tokelauans belong to the Congregational Christian Church (Protestant) and 34 per cent are Roman Catholic (Kelekolio, 2006:14). There are also a few people who have returned from overseas adhering to other religions such as Seventh Day Adventist.

Churches and their officers do not have any formal role in Tokelau's political decision making processes. This is generally adhered to in formal situations. Anecdotal evidence of an example of this is that the Congregational Pastor in Fakaofu was appointed as the chairperson of the General Fono meetings but had to step down due to concerns in his organisation's hierarchy that the church should not be involved in politics. Informally, however, church issues can have an effect on politics in Tokelau. The most obvious example of a church problem affecting village life and politics is the current rift in the village of Atafu. Commonly referred to in Tokelau and in the press as 'the Pastor situation', Atafu has become deeply divided over the reinstatement of their Pastor despite him having admitted sexually abusing a young girl in 1992 (Field, 2006a; Tait, 2006a). The Pastor was never charged with an offence, and left Tokelau until recently. Although he was asked by the international church body not to return, the Atafu village council overruled that decision and reinstated him (Field, 2006a). Those opposed to the council's decision are now refusing to attend church ('non-church'). Consequences of the division include reports of threats of physical violence and stones being thrown on the houses of people who were not attending church, non-church people being told to stay away from community activities, and nine non-church members of the village council being ejected for 'going against council decisions'. Tokelau's other villages are very concerned about the situation, and a resolution was made at the August 2006 General Fono that Atafu must resolve the situation as quickly as possible.

Each village has formal women's and men's organisations, although the arrangement in each is different. Both of these institutions were imported to Tokelau from Samoan culture (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:60, 68). The



*fatupaepae* (Women's Committees) were established by the New Zealand administration in the 1920s and given responsibility for maintaining hygiene and cleanliness in the villages (Kalolo, 1995:13). The organisations still exist today with similar functions, but also organise social events for women, the collection of handicrafts for sale, and preparation of 'takeaway' food or baked goods for purchase.

In Tokelau the men undertake physical labour for the village such as building houses, unloading cargo from the boat, and general maintenance. Fakaofu and Atafu both have organised men's groups called *aumaga*, although the groups' functions in each village are slightly different. In Atafu the *aumaga* is autonomous with its own leadership structure (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:60) and membership is compulsory for all men (Kalolo, 1995:13). Its function is to serve the village, but the *aumaga* sets its own work plan rather than simply following *taupulega* directives. In Fakaofu the *aumaga* also has its own leadership structure but is less independent from the village leadership, operating as the *taupulega*'s (council of elders) workforce under its direction (Kalolo, 1995:15; Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:60). Nukunonu does not have an *aumaga* as it is felt by the island's leaders that a formal organisation of men would create a "locus of power" structure outside the *taupulega* (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:66). Instead the men serve the village under the direct control of the *taupulega* (Kalolo, 1995:13).

### ***Economy and development***

Until the 1970s there was very little cash in use in Tokelau. Subsistence prevailed and there was limited contact with the outside world because the ship from Apia only visited once every three months. This changed rapidly during the 1970s as Tokelau came under the scrutiny of the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation and thus linked directly with the outside world (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:39). During this period the Tokelau Public Service (TPS) was also established, which provided a source of cash income for many in the islands and led to economic developments such as the setting up of village stores selling imported goods.

Fish has always been the most important food in Tokelau, and figures prominently in folklore and hospitality. The men catch the fish and the women distribute it along customary and expediency lines (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:23). It is not unusual for young boys to go door to door in the evenings offering a share of the day's catch. Material aspirations continue to rise in Tokelau, due to changed patterns of consumption and introduced ideas from overseas visits or relatives who migrated to New Zealand. Village cooperative stores sell sugar, rice, flour and tinned food which are more convenient in comparison to the labour involved in tending crops or fishing (Giese & Perez, 1983:138-9).

Tokelau is heavily dependent on outside financial support, especially from New Zealand, to survive economically. "Tokelau's small size, isolation and lack of resources greatly restrain economic development and confine agriculture to subsistence level" (UNDP, 2005). Bilateral aid from New Zealand was NZ \$9 million in 2004/05, and made up 80 per cent of the Tokelau government's recurring budget (MFAT, 2007a). The other major source of national income is payments from the United States for tuna fishery licences, which total from NZ \$0.5 million to NZ \$2 million annually (MFAT, 2007a). Other income is in the form of remittances from the 7,000 people of Tokelauan descent living in New Zealand, collectable stamps, woven handicrafts, and copra (UNDP, 2005). Remittances from New Zealand provide a high proportion of people's cash income. Families abroad also send boats, outboard motors and building materials.

It is difficult to find statistics on development indicators for Tokelau, and those that are available are often out of date. For example, the latest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) figure given on the Tokelau government's website is a GDP per capita of \$478 Australian dollars in 1980 and "there are no recent figures" (Government of Tokelau, 2006). The 1999 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pacific Human Development Report (HDR) did include health and education indicators for Tokelau, but gave no calculation of the Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI is based on GDP and Tokelau is considered to have a negligible level of GDP because so much of the territory's

revenue comes from donors and is therefore not considered income. In the 1999 HDR table of basic indicators the infant mortality rate in Tokelau was 38 per 1,000 births, which in that report was higher than in other countries in Polynesia and lower than in Melanesia and Micronesia (UNDP, 1999:105). Also in the 1999 HDR tables, adult literacy in Tokelau was 91 per cent, which from the statistics presented in that report was about the same level as in the rest of the Pacific, except for in Melanesia which had much lower levels (UNDP, 1999:105).

There have been ongoing advances in infrastructure in Tokelau's three villages, and there is now a 24-hour electricity supply from diesel generators, phone service in most homes, and high-speed internet available in the village offices. At the time of the 2006 census, 90 per cent of occupied houses in Tokelau were considered to be 'European style', rather than traditional Tokelauan *fales* (Kelekolio, 2006:40). Health services are basic with only one general practitioner, several nurses, and one dentist working in each hospital. There is a lack of adequate medical equipment and limited supply of many basic drugs, and the most serious cases must be transferred to either Samoa or New Zealand (UN, 2005a:11). Education is provided for up to Year 11 (age 15) and is undertaken in the Tokelauan language. The standard of education is not high, due to a lack of qualified teachers and limited access to good quality educational materials, and school facilities are dilapidated. Many families migrate to New Zealand or Samoa in order to receive a higher standard of education for their children (UN, 2005a:20). Tokelau is beginning to experience environmental problems, such as the accumulation of solid waste from food packaging and other imports, and pollution in the lagoons due to the oil leakage from aluminium dinghies with outboard motors (Kalolo, 1995:106).

Indigenous ideas about the nature of development are present in Tokelau. The term itself translates in Tokelauan as *atiakega* (to build upwards or upon, or add on) (Kalolo, 1995:103). The idea of *atiakega* originates from old prayers for a "harmonious relationship between themselves, their gods and the environment" (Kalolo, 1995:104). Such sentiments are still heard today in Christian sermons, and "reflects a collective wish that people benefit from



whatever resources they are provided" (Kalolo, 1995:104). *Atiakega* also involves ideas of dependency, in that the people depend on the traditional priests or Christian ministers, to perform rituals on their behalf in order for the gods or God to provide people's daily needs. "So life was predicated on dependency" (Kalolo, 1995:104). Under colonial rule, this attitude of dependency has been adapted to the political environment so that now Tokelau's expectation is that New Zealand, rather than God, will nurture, provide for, and protect its people. The concept of *atiakega* is continuous and cyclical since, due to the forces of nature, no project is ever fully or permanently completed but needs ongoing maintenance. *Atiakega* is also community-based, because the continuous building and improving activities are believed to be beneficial to everyone (Kalolo, 1995:105).

### ***Governance structure***

Historically the governance structure of Tokelau's villages was such that each had a chief and a council of elders (the most senior male of each family) who ran the affairs of the island, and also dealt with disputes over land or with breaches of law. The chief had a predominantly ceremonial role but had some influence in the establishment and enforcement of laws (Giese & Perez, 1983:133). This traditional structure was destroyed when slavers from Peru kidnapped about 253 people, or 47 per cent of the population, from the three islands in 1863. With so much of the population lost, and all of the able-bodied men gone, traditional tasks had to be reallocated and the villages reorganised. Because the chiefs and leaders had been kidnapped, outside influence was possible and came, in particular, from Christian missionaries (Giese & Perez, 1983:132).

There is no local tradition or colonial experience of national government in Tokelau, or a history of a unified national identity. Knowledge of any previous national identity had been lost with the passage of over 100 years of colonial rule (Angelo, 2001:1). Antony Hooper (1993:262) argues that 'tradition' in Tokelau is now actually 'neo-tradition' due to the influences of the market economy and other ideas from outside Tokelau. "The realities of village life are now a world away from those which prevailed a generation ago" (Hooper, 1993:260). Tokelau now has formal institutions of government in place at both

the national and village level, and a fully localised public service. Some argue that “age is no longer the main force of knowledge or political power since many young men prove their abilities through school and university education” (Giese & Perez, 1983:139). However, age is still an important factor in the governance structure, both in appointments to the *taupulega* and the etiquette and procedures of the councils. The contemporary governance structure in Tokelau is outlined below.

### Village level

The three villages are each run by a *taupulega* (council of elders) headed by the *faipule* (elected village leaders). These councils are the main authority in Tokelau (Kalolo, 1995:12; Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:50). In Atafu and Nukunonu the *taupulega* are made up of the *matai* (heads of extended families), so there are some younger members on those councils, while in Fakaofu new members are selected and invited to join the council by its existing members only once they reach seventy years of age (Kalolo, 1995:13). The *taupulega* are responsible for public service provision on their atolls, and delegate authority to the General Fono on national issues such as international relationships, communications, transport, fisheries, and trade (MFAT, 2005a).

There are two elected positions in each village, the *faipule* and the *pulenuku*. The role of the *faipule* is to be the “main official link between the village and the administering power” (Kalolo, 1995:14). The position of *faipule* is open to anyone regardless of their membership or not of the *taupulega*, but women rarely stand in elections for the position (Kalolo, 1995:14). The *pulenuku*, sometimes translated as mayor, is responsible for the internal operation of the village such as when and which work will be undertaken. The *pulenuku* also chairs the *taupulega* meetings and must be elected from its ranks (Kalolo, 1995:14). Village elections are held every three years, at the same time as General Fono delegates are elected.

### National level

The national representative body of Tokelau is called the General Fono. “The first combined meeting of the islands, and therefore a forerunner of the General

Fono, seems to have taken place in 1963” and the name General Fono was first used in the Administrator’s reports in 1972 and 1973 after he met with this group (Angelo, 2000). The General Fono has gone through a series of alterations to its structure and powers leading to its current format. At first it was simply a forum to discuss national issues in order to present a united front to the administering power. The initial advocacy role of the General Fono developed into policy formulation in the 1980s and limited legislative capacity by the mid 1990s (Angelo, 2000). As noted above, the General Fono is now responsible for national issues such as international relationships, communications, transport, fisheries, and trade under the delegation of powers from the *taupulega*, and has the power to enact laws in the form of General Fono Rules “for the peace, order and good government of Tokelau” (MFAT, 2007a). The General Fono currently has 21 members with representation from each atoll based on relative population sizes. Each *faipule* leads the delegation from their atoll, with the other delegates elected every three years by the villages. Current representation from each atoll is eight from Atafu, seven from Fakaofu and six from Nukunonu (Gasson, 2005:14). There has been a shift from delegates mainly being elders to the inclusion of women and younger men (Angelo, 2000). The General Fono meets three to four times per year for around three days at a time.

The national executive is called the Council for the Ongoing Government of Tokelau (commonly shortened to Council for Ongoing Government) and is made up of the *faipule* and *pulenuku* from each village. The Council for Ongoing Government is responsible for the national government of Tokelau between General Fono meetings. Each *faipule* holds several ministerial portfolios such as Finance, Health, Education, Support Services and Transport. The title of *ulu* or Head of Tokelau rotates annually among the three *faipule*, and the location of the General Fono meetings during each year moves with it.

### Public service

The Tokelau Public Service (TPS) was established in 1976 as an initiative of the New Zealand administration. It was seen that there were some essential services such as health and education which were beyond the ability of the

village councils and other village institutions to provide at an acceptable level. At first these services were provided by the New Zealand government through the Apia-based Office of the Tokelau Islands Administration (Giese & Perez, 1983:142). After a process of localisation followed by devolution these services are now provided by the TPS based in the villages and reporting directly to the *taupulega*.

The TPS is made up of four units, three village units (one on each atoll) providing health, education and other public services, and a national unit which comprises the Office of the Council of Ongoing Government (OCOG) and the Tokelau Apia Liaison office (TALO). This unit currently operates in Apia and is usually referred to as 'the Apia office'. The OCOG provides advice to the General Fono and *taupulega* on local, national and international policy issues and manages Tokelau's external relationships (Gasson, 2005:15). TALO also coordinates international services such as shipping and mail. The majority of the staff of the TPS is now based in the village offices run on each atoll by a General Manager who reports directly to the *taupulega*. Each village also has a bank, store and transport office run by the village office. While there is a potential for conflict between the political decisions of the *taupulega* and General Fono and the administrative actions of the TPS, to date these bodies have managed to maintain an effective working relationship. The potential for conflict arises because "the traditionally oriented politicians have a different approach to the running of island affairs than the professional public service, where neither kinship nor age are important criteria for acquiring decision-making posts" (Giese & Perez, 1983:138).

The development and formalisation of Tokelau's contemporary governance structure has been a key part of the long term processes aimed at moving the territory closer to self-determination and the end of New Zealand rule.

## **New Zealand's colonial rule of Tokelau**

Tokelau was placed under New Zealand control in November 1925, but the official date of transfer was February 1926 (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:266). Tokelau has never had a resident colonial administration. After New Zealand

took control in 1926 a Tokelau Officer was appointed by the Administrator in Samoa and visited Tokelau several times a year (Giese & Perez, 1983:133). After Samoa became independent in 1962 responsibility for the administration of Tokelau was shifted to the Department of Maori and Island Affairs in Wellington.

The Tokelau Act 1948 included Tokelau within New Zealand's territory. The islands are relatively autonomous in that New Zealand statute law only applies in Tokelau when specifically provided (Giese & Perez, 1983:136). There are no obvious signs of New Zealand having interfered in Tokelau's internal affairs, except in providing funding to maintain and develop the islands (Giese & Perez, 1983:139-40). Each village manages its own operation, and very little changed under New Zealand administration until the introduction of the TPS in the 1970s (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:37).

At first New Zealand officials considered that basic conditions in Tokelau were satisfactory – “order, health and peace prevailed and the atolls prospered” – and that they could continue as they were with the village councils in charge and minimal interference by New Zealand (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:266). After World War Two, New Zealand began to show interest in the development of social services in Tokelau. This change was partly related to a change in international attitudes to colonialism, and was also due to a decline in welfare in the islands resulting from the collapse in world copra prices (from which Tokelau supported itself) (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:267). The New Zealand government began to provide financial support to Tokelau, and secular education was introduced in the 1950s, schools and hospitals were built, radio communications established and students began to be sent to study in New Zealand (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:38, 267).

One proactive policy that New Zealand did implement and that had a major effect on life in Tokelau was the establishment of a resettlement scheme in the 1960s. The population of the islands was increasing, and people in the villages and officials in New Zealand were worried that Tokelau was becoming overpopulated, and that the already limited resources on the islands were



straining to cope. This concern was compounded when a tropical cyclone severely damaged food crops in all three atolls in early 1966 (*Matagi Tokelau*, 1991:140). By this stage there had already been some Tokelauans sent to New Zealand in 1963 under a Labour Department migrant worker scheme, who had written “enthusiastic letters home about their life in New Zealand, and sent money and parcels to their families”, and Cabinet had already approved in principle an official resettlement scheme (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:320). The first sponsored migrants under the scheme arrived in New Zealand in late 1966. It was originally intended to resettle 1,000 Tokelauans over five years, but due to delays and an economic downturn in New Zealand the total was only around 350 (Huntsman & Hooper, 321-22). The scheme was short lived in formal terms, but formed the basis for a long term and ongoing process of unsponsored migration, which has brought many resources (remittances) and new ideas into the islands. There are now approximately 7,000 Tokelauan people living in New Zealand (MFAT, 2006c:5).

Another New Zealand initiative that brought changes to Tokelau was the establishment of the TPS in 1976, which increased paid employment and hence the importance of cash in the atolls’ economy. There has been a progressive shift since the establishment of the TPS towards Tokelau taking control of its own affairs, which in turn has led to changes in the formal relationship with New Zealand and the role of the Administrator.

### ***Current administration***

The Administrator of Tokelau is statutorily responsible (Tokelau Act 1948) for the executive government of Tokelau (MFAT, 2005a). The Administrator is appointed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The current Administrator is David Payton who was appointed in October 2006. His immediate predecessor was Neil Walter, who was Administrator from 2003 to 2006. The practical day-to-day responsibilities of running Tokelau were officially delegated by the Administrator to Tokelauan authorities, first to the General Fono in 1994 and then to the *taupulega* in 2003 (Gasson, 2005:13). The current role of the Administrator therefore primarily involves giving advice and support to Tokelau and managing the decolonisation process from the New

Zealand end. This includes “contributing to Tokelau's efforts to establish appropriate governance structures and assisting with constitutional and legislative matters as Tokelau moves towards greater political autonomy”, and “maintaining dialogue” with the UN about the progress of decolonisation of the territory (MFAT, 2005b).

The Office of the Administrator of Tokelau, or ‘Tokelau Unit’, is based at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) in Wellington and has seven staff including specialist advisors in the areas of education, health, constitutional and legislative development, and financial and public sector management. The Administrator’s office also provides advice and support to Tokelau in the areas of shipping and the recruitment of experts, and is a ‘one stop shop’ coordinating all New Zealand government activities relating to Tokelau (MFAT, 2005b). This current administrative structure is the result of initiatives in the decolonisation process in Tokelau over the past 30 years which have enabled it to take more control of its own affairs.

### ***The decolonisation process***

The 2006 referendum was the latest chapter in the process of decolonisation in Tokelau, which essentially began in 1962 when New Zealand proposed that Tokelau become part of Western Samoa or the Cook Islands. Tokelau’s leaders considered this proposal and visited both of the other countries to discuss it with their leaders. In 1964 Tokelau decided that they would remain a territory of New Zealand, because the leaders felt that, even though New Zealand was more distant than the other two countries, ties to New Zealand had more potential to benefit Tokelau (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:318). The key dates in the decolonisation process in Tokelau are presented below in Table 1.1 and then explained and referenced in detail in the subsequent paragraphs.

While the process of decolonisation was underway in Niue during the 1960s and 1970s, very little focus, if any, was placed by New Zealand on the future constitutional development of Tokelau. New Zealand (Department of Maori and Island Affairs) was preoccupied with the Niue situation so the first comprehensive consideration of Tokelau’s future by New Zealand was probably

prompted by the first UN visiting mission to Tokelau in late 1976 (Giese & Perez, 1983:139). Tokelau's leaders told the 1976 UN Special Committee on Decolonisation's visiting mission that they were not interested in considering a future change of status. This visit made it easier for the Special Committee on Decolonisation to accept New Zealand's position that, due to past experience of Tokelauan resistance to change, New Zealand would not place pressure on Tokelau to change its status until Tokelau's leaders expressed a wish to make such a change (Watt, 1995:119).

*Table 1.1: Key dates in Tokelau's decolonisation process*

Year	Milestone/s
1962	♦ Tokelau first asked to consider a future change in status.
1964	♦ Proposal to become part of Western Samoa or the Cook Islands rejected by Tokelau.
1972	♦ General Fono established by Tokelau.
1976	♦ TPS established. ♦ First UN visiting mission, Tokelau declares unwilling to change status.
1994	♦ Full delegation of Administrator's powers to the General Fono. ♦ Formal assumption of control of recurrent (not project) budget. ♦ Fourth UN visiting mission, Tokelau declares considering change of status. ♦ Initiation of Modern House project formulation and planning.
1996	♦ General Fono given capacity to enact rules (laws).
1997	♦ Initial draft of Constitution produced.
2000	♦ Modern House project work programme initiated. ♦ New village-based governance structure approved.
2003	♦ Transfer of delegation of powers to the <i>taupulega</i> . ♦ Assumption of full (recurrent and project) budget control. ♦ General Fono formally endorses free association as chosen option.
2004	♦ Devolution of public services to villages. ♦ Development of draft Treaty of Free Association.
2005	♦ Constitutional consultations, approval of Constitution. ♦ Referendum date and rules set. ♦ Draft Treaty approved by New Zealand and Tokelau. ♦ Education and information programme.
2006	♦ Self-determination referendum, proposal to self-govern does not pass.



From 1976 to 2002, the Special Committee on Decolonisation sent five visiting missions to Tokelau in order to monitor its attitudes to and progress towards self-determination. Until 1994, Tokelauans gave the visiting missions the same negative response to the question of their future status. The fourth visiting mission in 1994 was informed by Tokelau's leaders that Tokelau was now actively considering moving towards an act of self-determination and developing a constitution, with a strong preference for self-government in free association with New Zealand as its future status (Watt, 1995:119). Throughout the decolonisation process, New Zealand has maintained the approach of gradually transferring to Tokelau control of its own affairs, with each step only implemented when Tokelau's leaders felt ready to take more control (Giese & Perez, 1983:139). A process of localisation and development of governance structures continued throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. Initiatives included refining the composition of the General Fono and formalising its functioning, full delegation of the Administrator's powers in early 1994, and the granting of law-making responsibilities to the General Fono in 1996 (MFAT, 2007a). The 1994 declaration of willingness to consider its future status signalled a change in attitude in Tokelau, and allowed New Zealand and Tokelau to begin a period of intensified preparation for self-government and constitutional development.

#### Preparation for self-government

Tokelau's reluctance to move towards self-government was partly based on a concern that Tokelau would not be able to cope administratively with greater levels of responsibility. There was a desire expressed by the Tokelauan government to build its capability and to have governance structures established prior to any act of self-determination. This would enable Tokelau to, as put by *faipule* Pio Tuia, the current leader of Nukunonu and *ulu* in 2005, "be self-reliant to the greatest extent possible" (Gasson, 2005:2). From the New Zealand and UN point of view building the Tokelauan government's capacity was desirable as it would fit in with the focus on good governance (accountability, transparency, and financial responsibility) seen in development practice from the early 1990s. The focus on greater self-reliance led to the initiation of the Modern House of Tokelau (MHT) project in the late 1990s, which was "about ensuring that the core traditional values and principles that

have harmonised and stabilised Tokelau are maintained... [and] identifying and integrating principles from afar that fit the local context” (*Faipule* Pio Tuia in MHT Project, 2002:i). The aim was to develop a new governance model that would be “functional for modern requirements” of self-government such as financial management and policy-making, while also “fit culturally” (Lindsay Watt in MHT Project, 2002:iii).

There was a strong feeling in Tokelau that the village power base was being eroded and weakened by the introduction of outside systems focused at the national rather than village level. The TPS employed almost all of the most capable and educated men and women in Tokelau (Hooper, 1993:258) and had considerable influence over village matters, but reported outside the village to the Apia headquarters and ultimately New Zealand. This lack of public service responsibility to the *taupulega* and the delegation of full administrative powers to the national General Fono was seen by Tokelau’s leaders as “subordination of village authority” and therefore as a threat to the Tokelauan way of life that had provided continuity, social cohesion and security to its people (Angelo & Vulu, 2004:233). The main principle underpinning the Modern House project was that the *taupulega* should be the starting point for development of a new governance structure in Tokelau (MHT Project, 2002:1).

The concept for the Modern House of Tokelau project was developed by the General Fono in the mid-1990s, and UNDP-supported workshops were held on all three atolls to assist in its design. For many Tokelauans these workshops were the first time they had been involved in public discussion of their government (Angelo, 1997:10). From 2000 onwards the project became a formal joint initiative involving Tokelau, the New Zealand government, and UNDP-Samoa (MHT, 2002:1). The Modern House project work programme of good governance, capacity building, sustainable development and ‘Friends of Tokelau’ projects was agreed in late 2000 (MHT Project, 2001:4). A wide range of sub-projects relating to these themes were undertaken, in particular constitutional development and building the capacity of the *taupulega* in order to enable them to assume control of village public services.

The Modern House project team presented a proposed village-based governance structure in all three atolls in 2000 to enable local input. The proposed structure received general endorsement from all three *taupulega* in 2000. Consultations with the *taupulega* and other village groups such as the *aumaga* and *fatupaepae* on the details of the structure were undertaken in 2001 (MHT Project, 2002:15). Under the new structure, the *taupulega* would take over management of their local public services such as the hospitals and schools. Workshops were held to begin to build the skills and knowledge needed in the villages to implement this devolution. Workshop topics included employer responsibilities (for villages to employ TPS staff directly), policy processes and project planning, writing and presentation skills, information technology training, financial management, and business concepts (MHT Project, 2002:5-6).

In 2003, New Zealand recognised the new governance structure and the progress made under the Modern House project by changing the delegation of the Administrator's powers from the General Fono to the *taupulega*, granting full budget responsibility to Tokelau, and withdrawing the New Zealand State Services Commission as the employer of the TPS. The transfer of full control of the TPS to the *taupulega*, or devolution, was made on 30 June 2004. The Modern House project was successful in finding local solutions and building Tokelau's confidence in its ability to self-govern. Modern House principles and projects are now mainstreamed or subsumed into Tokelau's general programme of public sector and constitutional development.

#### Moving closer to self-determination

By 2005, with the referendum moving nearer, Tokelau was, in the eyes of New Zealand officials at least, already effectively self-governing (Goff, 2005). Tokelau had its own legislative body, executive council and judicial system, and control over its own budget and public services (Hooper, 2007:20). Other key steps in preparing Tokelau for a change of political status were development of the constitution, establishment of a trust fund and the drafting of a new treaty with New Zealand.

Development of Tokelau's constitution began in the mid-1990s, with an initial draft produced by Tokelau's legal team in 1997 (MFAT, 2006c:6). The process was then picked up again in the Modern House project, and in-depth consultation on the draft constitution was undertaken in Tokelau's villages during the first half of 2005. In November 2004 the Council for Ongoing Government and senior TPS officials visited New Zealand to meet with the Prime Minister and senior New Zealand officials. Detailed negotiations on elements of a draft Treaty of Free Association were undertaken, along with the signing of the trust deed for the International Trust Fund for Tokelau (Hooper, 2007:20). The provisions of the Constitution and draft Treaty are outlined in Chapter Four.

The International Trust Fund for Tokelau was established in order to assist Tokelau to exercise a higher degree of financial self-sufficiency in the future. The purpose of the Trust Fund is to provide Tokelau with a source of revenue autonomous of donor governments or agencies (Gasson, 2005:2). The fund will have a five-year period of consolidation in interest-earning bank accounts. Decisions on the investment of the Trust Fund, and in the use of the revenue it generates, will eventually be made by Tokelauan authorities. The current balance of the Trust Fund is NZ\$25 million (MFAT, 2006a), mostly from contributions by New Zealand, but also including contributions from Australia and Britain. Tokelau also makes periodic contributions to the Trust Fund, primarily from fisheries licence fees.

The Constitution of Tokelau was approved by the three *taupulega* and the General Fono in August 2005. The draft Treaty of Free Association was approved by Tokelau in August and by the New Zealand Cabinet in November 2005 (MFAT, 2006c:7). With the formal legal components for self-determination in place, the new governance structure and devolution of public services fully implemented, and village and national public sector capacity building ongoing, the date for Tokelau's self-determination referendum was set for February 2006. Rules governing the conduct of the referendum and an education and information programme were also decided upon.

## Chapter summary

Tokelau has been under external control since being annexed by Britain in 1889. Administrative control of Tokelau was transferred to New Zealand in 1926. Under the Tokelau Act 1948, Tokelau was made part of the dominion of New Zealand and Tokelauans became New Zealand citizens. New Zealand has taken a largely 'hands off' approach to ruling Tokelau, with little interference in the day to day operation of the villages. The Administrator of Tokelau, based in Wellington, now acts mainly in an advisory role, and manages New Zealand's role in Tokelau's decolonisation process.

Tokelau's geography and history, people and culture, governance structure, and economy and development together form the local context in which the decolonisation process, including the referendum, were undertaken. Tokelau is very small, isolated, vulnerable, and has limited resources. The territory is almost completely dependent on outside financial support, with most of its recurring budget funded by New Zealand and other donors.

The three villages of Tokelau share a common language and culture, but see themselves as distinct from each other, with loyalty to the village often taking precedence over national unity. The contemporary governance structure is centred on the villages, which control their own public services and staff, and delegate responsibility for issues of national concern 'back up' to the General Fono. Tokelauans prefer to make decisions based on consensus rather than majority rule, in order to maintain highly valued *maopopo* (unity, togetherness).

The decolonisation of Tokelau effectively began in 1962 when a change of status was first considered by Tokelau's leaders, who declined to make any change at that stage. Tokelau's leaders continued to express their disinclination to consider a change of status until 1994, when they announced that they were now willing to discuss such a change. The announcement of openness to thinking about change was followed by a period of heightened focus and activity in Tokelau's decolonisation, in particular with the Modern House of Tokelau project. The Modern House project resulted in a reworking of Tokelau's

governance structure, into its present village-centred form. Tokelau also formulated a constitution and negotiated the establishment of the Tokelau International Trust Fund and the drafting of a Treaty of Free Association with New Zealand. These developments culminated in the decision by Tokelau's leaders to hold a referendum on self-government in February 2006.

The following chapter describes the broader global processes of which the Tokelau referendum, as a milestone in Tokelau's decolonisation experience, is a part. Literature on these global processes of colonialism and decolonisation is reviewed and presented. Governance issues in the developing world and the Pacific in particular are then examined.



## Chapter Two: Decolonisation, Governance and Development

This chapter provides an overview of discussion in the literature on the history and interpretation of colonialism and decolonisation, and the relationship between governance and development in the post-colonial world. The term decolonisation as used in this study refers to the end of the control of one country by another – in other words the end of colonialism. Decolonisation cannot therefore be examined without reference to colonialism. The first section defines colonialism and related terms, then looks at the origins and history of colonialism, the nature of colonial rule and some effects of colonialism, and finally outlines the colonial experience in the South Pacific. The second section examines decolonisation as a concept and a process, the role of the United Nations in decolonisation, and the process as it has been undertaken in the South Pacific. The third section gives an overview of thought on governance and development, and how ideas from this field apply in developing countries generally and the South Pacific in particular.

### **Colonialism**

#### ***Imperialism, colonisation and colonialism***

The historical process of social, political and economic expansion and domination by the metropolitan countries over the rest of the world is referred to using various terms. These include imperialism, colonisation and colonialism, which in common usage are often employed interchangeably to refer in general to rule or control by foreign people or governments (Fieldhouse, 1981:1). Some academic writers on colonialism (for example Bernstein, 2000:242; Fieldhouse, 1981:1) note differences in meaning between the three terms, and argue that they are distinct but related parts of an overall process.

Imperialism refers to the desire of one country to build and expand an empire, and the motivations and justifications for such an expansion (Fieldhouse, 1981:6; Nadel & Curtis, 1964:1). One motivation and justification for imperialism was an idea that the 'moral superiority' of one country gave them the right to rule other 'inferior' people (Nadel & Curtis, 1964:1). Other motives

for imperialism included economic factors such as metropolitan growth and expansion of capitalism, and political concerns such as competition with other metropolitan powers (Fieldhouse, 1981:2). Imperialism is also understood as a general system of domination of some states or regions by others, whether politically, economically, culturally or in any other way, and can involve either direct control through colonialism or indirect control using other means (Bernstein, 2000:250). Colonisation is one mechanism through which imperial expansion is achieved, and involves the establishment of metropolitan control over a new territory and its people. Two processes can be undertaken to establish metropolitan control – either mass settlement by metropolitan natives or the imposition of foreign rule (Bernstein, 2000:242).

Each form of colonisation leads to a different form of colonialism. Colonialism is “control of people and territories by foreign states, whether accompanied by significant permanent settlement or not” (Bernstein, 2000:242). The first form taken by colonialism is as a settler colony, entailing rule by an alien settler majority such as occurred in the British ‘dominions’ including New Zealand, Australia and Canada. The second form of colonialism is colonial administration, which is rule by an alien expatriate minority as was imposed in India, Africa and the Pacific by various metropolitan powers. One distinction between the two types of colonialism is that in the first form of colonialism “the settlers succeeded in transforming a non-European into a fundamentally European country” (Fieldhouse, 1981:5) while in the second form the colonial administrators did not achieve such a transformation.

### ***History and origins of colonialism***

Empire building and domination of foreign peoples has occurred at various times and in different parts of the world (Weatherby, 2003:25). “Extension of power over others has been one of the chief preoccupations of mankind throughout recorded history” (Nadel & Curtis, 1964:3). For example, the Roman Empire covered much of Europe as far back as the first century BC, and empires based in China and India also controlled large areas. Two main periods of imperialism and colonialism have shaped the world as it is today (Weatherby, 2003:25). The first period ran from the fourteenth to nineteenth centuries, and



the second period occurred in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, although there were overlaps between the two. This chapter focuses on the second period, during which the Pacific, including Tokelau, was colonised.

The first period of colonialism is usually seen as having ended in the mid-eighteenth century with the independence of the United States and the dismantling of South American empires of Spain and Portugal (Nadel & Curtis, 1964:4; Weatherby, 2003:25). The nineteenth century saw the beginning of a new era of imperialism, with new territories established and the entry of new metropolitan powers. The British, French, Dutch, Belgian, German, Japanese and others established control over most of Asia, Africa and the Pacific (Weatherby, 2003:25). This period continued until the post-World War Two era of decolonisation, although there are remnants of those empires, such as the French in the Pacific Islands.

The origins of the second era of imperialism and colonialism are usually seen as a mix of economic, political and strategic factors, sometimes with an accompanying humanitarian or religious motivation (Nadel & Curtis, 1964:15; Weatherby, 2003:29). This humanitarian motive was generally in the form of the 'civilising mission', which is "the moral obligation of Christians from a more advanced civilisation to improve 'backward' peoples" (Fieldhouse, 1981:23). Economic motivations arose from the demand for tropical raw materials such as oil and rubber in metropolitan countries for use in manufacturing processes and mass consumption by large urban populations (Bernstein, 2000:244; Nadel & Curtis, 1964:14; Weatherby, 2003:29). Economic concerns also led to strategic and political motives to build empires, with aggressive competition for imperial ascendancy and the entry of new players who aimed to emulate the wealth and prestige other European countries saw Britain as having gained from its extensive empire (Nadel & Curtis, 1964:15; Fieldhouse, 1981:20). There was also a strategic need to guard trade routes in order to guarantee flow of communications and commodities, and to deny competitors access to trade routes and raw materials (Bernstein, 2000:249; Nadel & Curtis, 1964:17; Weatherby, 2003:30).

### ***Colonial administration***

The metropolitan powers eventually assumed complete control of the government of their territories, in the form of either direct or indirect rule. Direct rule involved abolishing or ignoring traditional institutions and constructing bureaucracy of paid officials, while indirect rule entailed forming an alliance with traditional rulers in order to rule through them, and were used to different extents and in different combinations by the various colonial powers (Potter, 2000:278,280). The establishment of central government administration systems was new to most territories. Some of the key features of these systems, as identified by Potter (2000:275,283), were bureaucratic elitism (key positions at all levels were reserved for European officials who took directions from the metropolis), authoritarianism (participation by the governed people in government decision-making was minimal), and statism (high levels of government intervention in the economy).

One reason that bureaucracies and bureaucrats became so dominant was that colonialism was apolitical in both the colonies and the metropolises, in that in the former there was a lack of democratic structures and in the latter a lack of public and therefore political interest (Fieldhouse, 1981:26). Colonial empires did not receive much attention in either popular thought or parliamentary debate in Europe until after World War Two, so the colonies were “politically distanced” from the metropolis (Betts, 2004:16). Political distance meant that control over colonial affairs and decision making was effectively left to the state bureaucracy (Fieldhouse, 1981:26). Bureaucratic rule had some positive benefits, as lifetime civil servants developed a vast body of knowledge and also often a deep concern for the welfare of the colonies they were based in. However, colonial bureaucrats were typically too wrapped up in their routines and internal systems and avoiding political controversy, meaning that immediate business was prioritised at the expense of planning for the future (Fieldhouse, 1981:27). Fieldhouse (1981:43) comments that “administrators on the spot lacked both the tools and qualifications to carry through their stated programmes. All modern colonies were starved of resources... Those who ran the colonies seem also, in retrospect, to have been inadequately equipped intellectually... for the most part remained amateurs in most aspects of the problems with which they

had to deal. Few had any real knowledge of the societies in which they were to work when they arrived there”.

Colonial administrations needed revenue to maintain their administrative and military control over their territories, and few metropolitan governments were willing to bear the costs, so they became proactive in the economy (statism) to ensure their generation (Bernstein, 2000:252). Full colonial administration was developed mainly to address economic concerns, because more internal political control was required in order to, for example, invest in roads to access resources and open up trade routes, and guarantee land rights for settlement or plantation by home nationals (Bernstein, 2000:252; Fieldhouse, 1981:20-1).

In order to maintain colonial rule, which to some degree depended on a level of compliance by the people they were ruling, colonial states promoted what Potter (2000:283) calls “hegemonic ideologies” about their own nature. These ideologies had two forms: the first related to the civilising mission approach, presenting the colonial state as benevolent, just, and developing the colony for the benefit of its people; the second related to the use of force and promoted belief in the colonial power as invincible and the colonised people weak or backward, and therefore resistance would be futile. (Potter, 2000:283). This led to “the internalisation and acceptance of the total superiority of European culture” by the colonised people and “widespread cultural and psychological dependency” (Potter, 2000:284).

### ***Colonialism and development***

All colonial powers believed that they had something of value to offer the people they ruled – colonialism was a “necessary instrument of ‘modernisation’ which would help other peoples to do what they could not have done by themselves” (Fieldhouse, 1981:42). Colonial administrators generally saw development as “making full use of factor endowments to increase production and consumption, which in turn should increase wealth in real terms” (Fieldhouse, 1990:80). This involved building infrastructure and the abilities of local people to participate in the monetary economy through health and education measures.

Development in the form of modernisation based on economic growth was seen as having the potential to both improve the lives of colonial subjects and serve the commercial interests of the metropolis (Fieldhouse, 1990:81-82). Therefore ideologies of progress were used to justify continued colonial rule and outline its responsibilities. Some writers such as Nadel and Curtis (1964:24-5) argue that, however traumatic an experience for colonised peoples, and despite the damage done to indigenous cultures, European colonial rule was a powerful agent of modernisation through “suppression of tribal wars and savage customs, the building of schools, churches and hospitals, the improvement of communications, and the economic utilisation of natural resources”.

### ***Colonialism in the South Pacific***

All Pacific Islands societies were ruled by one metropolitan power or another, as either colonies, protectorates or territories, for a period of about 100 years from the late nineteenth century (Colbert, 1997:19; Crocombe, 2001:415). Even Tonga, which formally remained a kingdom, was effectively under the indirect rule of Britain as a protectorate. The main colonial powers in the South Pacific were Britain and France, with Germany, the United States and later New Zealand and Australia also controlling territories in the region. A full list of the colonial rulers and dates of colonisation in the South Pacific is presented in Appendix A. Many of the same motivations for imperialism as seen internationally, such as economic and strategic aims, were also at play in the Pacific.

Initially the governments of Europe and the United States did not have any strategic or economic plans for the South Pacific region. Well into the nineteenth century, outside contact was limited to solitary traders, shipmasters and missionaries (Colbert, 1997:19; Fischer, 2002:120). With the increase in foreign settlement associated with improved shipping and therefore economic potential, the prime concern of these foreign governments became the establishment of “the rule of law to control traditional violence and regulate transactions between peoples in a generally peaceful and mutually agreeable fashion” (Fischer, 2002:122). Formal declarations by metropolitan nations of ownership or control of Pacific territories were rare, until the entry of Germany

into the Pacific in the 1870s saw strategic concerns arise for the other foreign powers in the region (Colbert, 1997:23).

The German goal was to 'collect' large parts of the Pacific to provide resources for its growing economy and to distract attention from its own domestic problems (Hempenstall, 1994:30), which obliged Britain, France and the United States to formulate their own goals and strategies for the Pacific, and then act on those plans (Fischer, 2002:123). This led to what Crocombe (2001:416) refers to as "the 'final carve-up' of the 1890s" during which colonies or protectorates in all South Pacific territories were formalised. While New Zealand and Australia were not directly involved as colonial powers at this stage, "Britain became the largest colonial power in the region, partly due to pressure from Australia and New Zealand to assuage their fears of being surrounded by hostile French and German forces" (Crocombe, 2001:417).

By 1900 all the South Pacific territories were formally established and the "era of full colonial rule" that spanned the first half of the twentieth century began (Crocombe, 2001:420).

#### Colonial rule and development

Most of the features of colonial rule observed in territories worldwide were also experienced in the Pacific. Administration was centralised, bureaucratic and carried out by expatriate officials from the metropolitan countries. Ideas of the civilising mission and incorporation into the world economy were visible in the policies adopted by colonial administrations in the South Pacific as they were elsewhere. Both direct and indirect forms of administration were utilised by colonial powers in the region.

Indigenous Pacific Islanders were generally not given much role in the introduced central governments apart from being required to submit to their laws and powers and in many cases to pay taxes (Crocombe, 2001:420; Fischer, 2002:169). In terms of the civilising mission, "colonial officials believed that they had a duty to take control of Islanders' affairs for their own good" (Firth, 1997:254). Firth (1997:262) sees a key facet of the colonial rule of the South



Pacific as “the invention of The Native”. The term was used to refer to all non-Europeans in the islands, who were seen to lack European qualities such as hard work, forward thinking, and logical reasoning (Firth, 1997:262). The perception by colonial rulers of their subjects in the Pacific as “childlike” (Thompson, 1994:78) meant that colonial administrators did not see them as capable of ruling themselves, so colonial rule in the Pacific was often authoritarian and paternalistic (Thompson, 1994:72). Despite these paternalistic attitudes on the part of colonial administrators and the lack of indigenous participation in government, “relations between Island societies and governments were more often characterised by alliances, accommodations and co-operation than by confrontation and protest” (Firth, 1997:256).

Colonial rule of South Pacific societies took both direct and indirect forms depending on the approach of the colonial power and the pre-existing indigenous structures. For example Britain favoured indirect rule in its Polynesian territories, utilising and building on chiefly systems as the basis of their rule (Crocombe, 2001:420). Indirect rule was seen most strongly in Fiji and Tonga where “the administration ruled through existing forms of government and depended on traditional elites who received the backing of the government” (Firth, 1997:274). France on the other hand preferred direct rule, in line with its ‘assimilationist ideal’, and therefore in its Polynesian territories chiefly systems were eroded (Crocombe, 2001:420). Direct rule was also preferred by colonial powers in Melanesia as “the colonial response to weaker indigenous governments” (Firth, 1997:274).

Most colonial governments in the South Pacific were under-financed and understaffed, with most territories expected to pay for their own administration (Firth, 1997:255). This lack of revenue meant that, in terms of development of their territories, colonial administrations initially focused their efforts in the economic sector. Colonial governments promoted the incorporation of their territories into the global economy by fostering exports of tropical raw materials to their metropolitan bases (Firth, 1997:264). The demands of the export economy increased in villages which were required to supply labour and cash crops for the export economy, which took their time away from subsistence



activities. A central issue of colonial policy, which was a particular concern of Britain, was to decide how the village and export sectors of the colonial economy should interact, and how to protect the interests of both European settlers and indigenous peoples (Colbert, 1997:27). On the other hand, in French and Australian Pacific territories, state and private (metropolitan) interests were very closely aligned and indigenous peoples' interests were marginalised. This meant that roads, wharves and other infrastructure were constructed in the interests of commerce, rather than to meet the needs of local people. For example, roads were built to provide plantation access rather than to connect villages to each other or the outside (Firth, 1997:265).

Once the colonial export economies of the South Pacific began to generate more revenue for their administrations, improving the welfare of colonial subject became the focus. Addressing the depopulation of the islands caused by introduced diseases was a particular concern, so administrations began to introduce public medical services (Firth, 1997:278). There was success in halting depopulation with initiatives such as quarantine and provision of modern medicines, and medical services slowly improved (Crocombe, 2001:420). Some initiatives introduced in colonial times are still effective today, for example, in Fiji, Samoa and Tokelau women's committees were established and given responsibility for village hygiene and general tidiness and cleanliness (Firth, 1997:281). These committees are still functioning strongly and are influential in contemporary villages. Most colonial administrations began to provide public education (Crocombe, 2001:420), although many village schools were extremely rudimentary and the best schools continued to be run by missionaries (Firth, 1997:285).

Many of the facets of colonial rule in the South Pacific in general were also part of the colonial experience in territories controlled by New Zealand. New Zealand had similar imperial motives to the other Pacific colonial powers, and its rule followed many of the same patterns, in particular in its tendency towards authoritarian and paternalistic styles of administration.

### New Zealand as a colonial power

New Zealand's imperialism had its origins in the nineteenth century, when "a realisation of this country's geographical position in the central South Pacific led various writers, politicians and propagandists to assert that New Zealand had an imperial destiny, peculiar responsibilities and opportunities in the South Seas... [and] this imperial tradition penetrated to all levels of society in the colony" (Ross, 1964:1). Ross (1964:4-7) also reports some more specific motivations, such as trade between New Zealand and the Pacific Islands, and a concern for the welfare of 'native inhabitants' of the islands. Strategic concerns were also important as New Zealand was worried that allowing other European nations, such as Germany and France, to establish bases in the South Pacific was a threat to New Zealand's security (Crocombe, 2001:419; Ross, 1964:5)

At first, New Zealand, along with Australia, took the approach of lobbying Britain to establish further territories in the South Pacific. Britain was not interested in extending its Pacific empire which already included Fiji, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands (now Kiribati and Tuvalu), the Solomon Islands and joint rule with the French in Vanuatu (Crocombe, 2001:419; Hempenstall, 1994:31). In 1888, New Zealand succeeded in persuading Britain to declare a protectorate over the Cook Islands and Niue, which New Zealand eventually annexed in 1901 (Crocombe, 2001:419). As noted in Chapter One, Tokelau had been a British protectorate from 1889, then in 1916 was annexed as part of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands colony, before it was ultimately transferred to New Zealand administration in 1926. In 1920 Western Samoa (now Samoa), which had been under German control prior to World War One, was assigned to New Zealand as a mandate territory under the League of Nations, then a trust territory under the UN charter in 1947 (Townend, 2003:8).

New Zealand's colonial rule of its territories, while not exploitative or destructive in the extreme, was not without problems. "Administration of all four territories was an altogether tougher and less glamorous matter than the late nineteenth century politicians would have imagined. Indeed policy making was frequently characterised by muddle or even neglect" (Watt, 1995:111). New Zealand's administrative record was "dull" and colonial officials had no previous

experience of colonial administration or professional training in the field (Crocombe, 2001:433). One problem was that New Zealand saw its Pacific Island subjects as politically naïve, so the New Zealand Parliament controlled legislation for the territories in such a way that acknowledged local customs but ignored them in its administration policies, essentially leading to rule through 'autocratic paternalism' (Firth, 1887:257; Thompson, 1994:78). In Samoa in particular, New Zealand's military administrators "ruled with a heavy hand" (Colbert, 1997:29). The island territories were the responsibility of the Minister of Island Affairs. For most of the first half of the twentieth century, all of these Ministers were Maori, and were concerned to improve social services and to minimise industrial and commercial development which they feared might disrupt the indigenous cultures as had been their own experience in New Zealand under British rule (Thompson, 1994:80; Crocombe, 2001:433). Although New Zealand was more effective than most colonial powers in providing primary education, its provision of technical and higher education was inadequate (Crocombe, 2001:433).

New Zealand's rule of Tokelau, Samoa, Niue and the Cook Islands continued until the decolonisation process, begun globally after World War Two, was well underway. Samoa, the Cook Islands, and Niue are now no longer territories of New Zealand, and their change of status was part of the wider international process of decolonisation. The process of decolonisation reached its height in the 1960s and 1970s, but is still ongoing with several territories remaining under foreign administration today, including Tokelau.

## **Decolonisation**

Decolonisation can be seen as a political or, even more narrowly, as a constitutional (transfer of sovereignty) process. Decolonisation is sometimes also argued to be economic, cultural or psychological (Darwin, 1988). This thesis only addresses political decolonisation as seen in the ending of formal colonial relationships during the twentieth and twenty first centuries. Decolonisation is a global process, involving a series of peaceful or confrontational political acts, through which the territories dominated by metropolitan countries gain independence (Betts, 2004:111). More specifically,

decolonisation refers to “the termination of formal political control over specific colonial territories and its replacement by some new relationship” (Neemia, 1992:1). The magnitude of decolonisation as transfer of political power is clearly evident in the increase of the number of UN members, from 51 member nations when the UN was founded in 1945, to 191 in 2002 (Betts, 2004:2).

Immediately after World War Two, the metropolitan countries were still reluctant to give up their empires. The global process of decolonisation began in the late 1940s with India’s independence from Britain in 1947, followed by the independence of several other British, French and Dutch territories in Asia and the Middle East (Betts, 2004:31). Most of Asia and Africa was decolonised during the three decades following World War Two (Darwin, 1988:6). In Sub-Saharan Africa, decolonisation was extremely rapid, with almost all of the colonial territories achieving independence between 1960 and 1963 (Betts, 2004:33). In the South Pacific, decolonisation began in 1962 with the independence of Samoa, but the process is still incomplete, with French, United States and New Zealand territories remaining. Although more than 80 former colonies have now achieved some form of self-determination, there are still sixteen non-self-governing territories recognised by the UN, including Tokelau (UN, 2005b). The full list of remaining territories is presented in Appendix B.

### ***Origins of decolonisation***

Explanations for the end of empire usually relate to the after-effects of World War Two, international politics and nationalist movements (for example Betts, 2004:37; von Albertini, 1971:524; Fieldhouse, 1981:49). Increasing concern in metropolitan and other Western nations about the morality of having an empire also provided motivation for decolonisation (Fieldhouse, 1981:49; Potter, 2000:284). These influences combined and led to decolonisation in general, although the mix of pressures in each case varied.

World War Two gave rise to both military and economic pressures for decolonisation. The economies of the colonial powers in Europe were severely weakened by the war, hence they could no longer afford to defend or administer their empires (Fieldhouse, 1981:24; Potter, 2000:284-5). Nationalist

movements within colonial territories were another main reason for decolonisation. These movements often involved mass protests and sometimes violent uprisings. "Modernisation instigated by colonial powers... stimulated the forces which would one day lead to emancipation" (von Albertini, 1971:525). Potter (2000:285) argues that the colonial ideology of metropolitan superiority, invincibility and benevolence was no longer dominant. Many colonial subjects now had Western education and, therefore, knowledge of ideals of freedom and democracy in metropolitan countries. Such people began to question the benevolence of the colonial state, and the events of World War Two meant many now also doubted the military invincibility of their colonial rulers (Betts, 2004:27). There was also an economic as well as political ideological basis, with a "belief that political independence is a necessary condition of more rapid and comprehensive development" (Bernstein, 2000:269). Colonial economies were seen to be distorted in favour of the colonial powers, which accumulated all the profits while blocking development of manufacturing in their colonies in order to maintain their privileged position (Bernstein, 2000:269).

In terms of international politics, two major factors in the post-war political climate provided impetus for decolonisation and influenced its course. The first was the Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, and the second was the establishment of the United Nations. The Cold War had an effect on decolonisation in that the United States and the Soviet Union both supported the idea in most cases, and used their support for the process to compete for influence among the new nations, in order to strengthen their positions as the "new world superpowers" (Bernstein, 2000:265). The United States and Soviet Union also involved themselves in the decolonisation decisions of the colonial powers, for example, the United States supported continued European rule in countries it saw as "bulwarks" against communism (Betts, 2004:36). The anti-colonial rhetoric in the United States, particularly that of President Woodrow Wilson in the inter-war period and President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the post-war period, also provided motivation for decolonisation in order for metropolitan powers to stay in the favour of the United States (Betts, 2004:11,24). The UN influence on decolonisation was more direct, with the UN Charter establishing the formal international



framework for decolonisation (Darwin, 1988:21). Once the decolonisation process was underway, the UN's membership expanded rapidly with the addition of numerous former colonies, which led to an intensified anti-colonial attitude in the organisation and, eventually, a much stronger and more specific declaration on decolonisation (Watt, 1995:111).

The UN Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples was made by the UN General Assembly in 1960. This declaration states that "the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights, is contrary to the United Nations Charter, and is an impediment to the promotion of world peace and cooperation, and that steps should be taken to transfer, unconditionally, all powers to the Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories so that they might enjoy complete freedom and independence" (UN, 2005b). The three options for full self-government were defined by the UN as free association with an independent state, integration into an independent state, or complete independence. The UN does not consider the status of a territory to have changed unless the choice among these options is clearly the will of the residents of that territory as demonstrated through a referendum or election (Leibowitz, 1976:204).

The UN Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementations of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (commonly shortened to Special Committee on Decolonisation) was established in 1962 to monitor the application of the declaration and to make recommendations on its implementation (UN, 2005b). The Special Committee on Decolonisation became a forum in which administering powers were "nudged, exhorted, or if necessary, exposed" in their efforts (or lack thereof) in meeting their UN obligations to move their territories towards decolonisation under one of the above options (Watt, 1995:112). The role of the UN in decolonisation is now being reviewed by the organisation, including whether the decolonisation committee is still relevant and effective.



### ***Decolonisation processes***

In practice decolonisation has generally been a process involving constitutional development and building local capabilities, although the experience varied greatly between different countries. Constitutional development is the key process involved in political decolonisation. All former colonies went through the process of creating formal constitutions detailing their new structures and principles of government. The constitutions of metropolitan and newly-decolonised nations were often used as models. In most territories where there were attempts to improve the capabilities of local people to operate their own governments, the method chosen was localisation, which involves the replacement of colonial officials with locals (or short term contractors until locals can be trained appropriately) either prior to or following the change in political status (Larmour, 1998:9).

At the height of global decolonisation, the key decisions on decolonisation tended to be taken in the capitals of the colonial powers, not in the colonies themselves (Chamberlain, 1985:1). As a result, the different approaches of metropolitan powers to colonial rule affected the decolonisation process and the position of successor states (Fieldhouse, 1981:29). The ongoing British approach, of preparing their colonies for eventual self-government and decentralised rule, meant that decolonisation proceeded much more smoothly for them than for the French, who held on to their theories of assimilation and centralised control (Betts, 2004:33, von Albertini, 1971:524). For example, British colonial administrations often established local legislative councils, so the structure was already in place for indigenous politicians to press for representative democracy (Fieldhouse, 1981:31).

Due to a dependency mentality common among colonial subjects, as a result of their long periods spent under colonial rule, building up the confidence and courage of colonised people and peoples was important to the success of decolonisation (Potter, 2000:284). This was particularly the case for nationalist movements to enable them to mobilise populations to demand independence. Confidence-building has also been important for colonial powers in regions where not many nationalist movements have emerged, such as the South

Pacific, and territories have needed encouragement to move towards greater independence.

### ***Decolonisation in the South Pacific***

The experience of decolonisation in the South Pacific, like that of colonialism, has many of the same features and underlying motivations as in the rest of the world, including the effects of World War Two, the new post-war international order and priorities, and the processes followed to achieve transfer of political sovereignty and control. As noted above, the main differences in the South Pacific from experiences elsewhere were that local nationalist movements were rarely a reason for decolonisation to be initiated, and that the new status of several of the decolonised states in the region was less than full independence.

Immediately following the Second World War, which had a direct effect on the Pacific with the Japanese invasion from the north, colonial powers felt that there was too much variance in development levels in the South Pacific for all of the nations in the region to become independent straight away (Fischer, 2002:220). Each colonial power also had its own agenda with New Zealand, Australia and Britain strongly committed to the concept of decolonisation and eventually offering independence to 'prepared' Pacific Islanders, albeit to varying degrees. France, meanwhile, refused any mention of independence (Fischer, 2002:221).

Samoa (then called Western Samoa) was the first South Pacific nation to gain independence, in 1962. This event was soon followed by the British decision to withdraw from its Pacific colonies as soon as it could establish independent governments, which it proceeded to implement throughout the 1970s (Crocombe, 2001:425). Vanuatu was the most recent South Pacific nation to gain independence, which occurred in 1980 (Crocombe, 2001:425). As noted previously, the decolonisation of the South Pacific is far from complete, with New Zealand, the United States and France still controlling territories in the region. A full list of the dates of independence or other change of political status of the South Pacific nations is provided in Appendix A.

Following the world trend, every South Pacific territory that was decolonised prepared a constitution prior to its change in political status, whether independence or self-government (Crocombe, 2001:439). The people tasked with formulating these new constitutions, both local leaders and their foreign advisors, attempted to formulate the documents to suit the needs of the new nations. However, the use of examples from abroad meant that the constitutions often followed the models of colonial rulers. Most South Pacific countries adopted Westminster-style constitutions (Larmour, 2001:1). Westminster constitutions entail the selection of government ministers from within the national legislature, adversarial political parties, and separation of the powers of the executive, legislature and judiciary (Larmour, 2001:2). Although questions are now raised about the appropriateness of these systems in the local context, and most South Pacific nations have reviewed and amended their constitutions, few have breached them. The record of governing according to constitutions is better in the South Pacific than in most regions in the world (Crocombe, 2001:439).

Unlike many countries in Africa and Asia, the decolonisation of the Pacific Islands has mostly been a peaceful process, without any conflict or overt animosity between the colonised and colonisers (Crocombe, 2001:438; Fischer, 2002:240). Colonial powers saw that decolonisation was in their own best interests and islanders did not resist because it was usually what they also wanted (Fischer, 2002:240). Independence movements did not arise because the small size and fragmented nature of many Pacific societies meant there was little concept of nationhood or scope for mass mobilisation to push for independence (Crocombe, 2001:438). The occurrence of only a few nationalist movements in the South Pacific does not necessarily reflect the satisfaction of colonial subjects with their situation, but rather represents a perception that the likelihood of improving their welfare by resisting colonial rule was low (Crocombe, 2001:438). Samoa was the most notable exception to this trend, where the Mau movement created significant pressure for decolonisation, through mass protests, despite New Zealand's initial attempts to suppress the movement (Colbert, 1997:30).

There is a general reluctance among the remaining territories in the South Pacific, including Tokelau, American Samoa, French Polynesia, and New Caledonia, to complete the decolonisation process, due to concerns regarding future economic support and the drop in living standards that greater independence might entail (Henderson, 2002:4). For example, in the 1970s when it was proposed that American Samoa join with independent Samoa, American Samoans voted overwhelmingly in favour of staying with the United States. The dependent status of American Samoa actually improves the welfare of its residents, because American Samoans continue to benefit from their right to free entry into the United States mainland and all its institutions and facilities (Crocombe, 2001:431). In fact, research by Geoff Bertram (2006:12-13) has shown that the level of GDP per capita of island countries depends on the strength of their ongoing political links to a metropolitan power, with integrated islands (strongest ties) such as American Samoa having the highest GDP and fully independent states (weakest ties) such as Vanuatu having the lowest.

Diversity in development levels and general reluctance led to utilisation of the option of self-government in free association, which is often seen as a 'middle ground' between full independence and continued status as a territory (Bertram, 2006:11; Liebowitz, 1976:1). Free association is only loosely defined by the UN in Resolution 1514 and its interpretation in practice has varied. The key factors for recognition of the status by the Special Committee on Decolonisation are that the choice is clearly the will of the local people, there is no scope for external parties to change the constitution, and the country has the freedom to become fully independent at any time in the future (Liebowitz, 1976:202). The free association approach was pioneered by New Zealand with the Cook Islands and then Niue, and was proposed for Tokelau in the 2006 referendum.

#### New Zealand and decolonisation

New Zealand takes its obligations to decolonise under the UN Charter very seriously. New Zealand has been involved in the UN's push for decolonisation right from the outset, with Prime Minister Peter Fraser chairing the Trusteeship Committee that produced the chapters of the UN Charter which established the principle of self-determination of dependent territories (Watt, 2001:110). As

well as its commitment to the UN decolonisation principles, New Zealand adopted the position in relation to its territories that constitutional and political development should be the focus of the decolonisation process, because “self-government should not be delayed for economic considerations... limited resources or economic capacity should not stand in the way... self-government should be seen as a stimulus to economic development, by unlocking national energies” (Watt, 1995:114) and “the act of self-determination is not an end in itself. It is the start of a new road... the confidence to address challenges arising from the realities of size, location and resources cannot come from political dependency” (Watt, 1995:121).

Samoa became independent from New Zealand in 1962 after 79 per cent of voters in a 1961 plebiscite on the constitution and independence voted in favour of independence (Townend, 2003:17). A Treaty of Friendship was then signed which gave New Zealand responsibility for the defence and security of Samoa. Also in 1962, New Zealand presented Tokelau, Niue and the Cook Islands with the options for their future status of integration, independence, free association and formation of a Pacific federation (Townend, 2003:21; Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:318). The New Zealand Minister of Island Territories expressed New Zealand’s clear preference for free association in a speech to the Cook Islands Legislative Assembly (Wilson, 1969:107). As explained in Chapter One, Tokelauan leaders investigated the option of integration or federation with other Pacific Island territories with visits to Samoa and the Cook Islands, but ultimately opted to choose none of the options and instead retained the status quo as a territory of New Zealand (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:318).

In 1962, the Cook Islands Legislative Assembly chose free association as their preferred option, with the strong proviso that New Zealand citizenship rights must be maintained in any future arrangement (Wilson, 1969:108). Three constitutional advisors from New Zealand visited the Cook Islands in 1963 and after discussions with the legislative assembly drafted the constitution (Townend, 2003:26). In 1964, the Cook Islands Constitution Bill was tabled in the New Zealand Parliament and passed as the Cook Islands Constitution Act 1964 (Wilson, 1969:111). It was decided that rather than holding a referendum



in the islands the 1965 Legislative Assembly election would be fought on the issue of the constitution, thereby giving the Cook Islands people the opportunity to demonstrate their preference for or against self-government in free association (Townend, 2003:26). In 1965, after a “whirlwind information campaign” utilising radio broadcasts, pamphlet distribution and public meetings, the pro-self-government Cook Islands party won 14 of the 22 seats in the assembly. The new Legislative Assembly ratified the constitution in July 1965, and the Cook Islands became officially self-governing in free association with New Zealand (Wilson, 1969:113).

Niuean leaders visited Wellington in 1963 to discuss the options with which they had been presented in 1962. After this visit they accepted in principle only self-government in free association as their future status, but would not commit to a timetable for a change to that status (Chapman, 1976:14). New Zealand legal advisors first visited Niue in 1965 for discussions on the appropriate timeline for moving to self-government, and recommended that the planned deadline of 1966 be extended (Townend, 2003:37). In 1966, the Niuean Assembly was reformed into a membership system of parliament, with individual candidates representing electorates (Chapman, 1976:26). The New Zealand Resident Commissioner in Niue was still officially the head of government, but in 1968 the Commissioner adopted a “closed door policy” so Niueans could become accustomed to taking issues to their elected representatives rather than the New Zealand Commissioner and local leaders had to take more responsibility for the day to day running of the island (Townend, 2003:39). The Niuean leadership realised in 1970 that they were effectively already self-governing, and requested further legal advice from New Zealand in order to draft a constitution. A committee of the Niuean Assembly was established in 1971 which held village meetings on the issue of self-government and proposed that 1974 be set for an act of self-determination, which was ratified by the full Assembly (Townend, 2003:40). The constitution was prepared with the assistance of New Zealand legal advisors during the next three years, was introduced as a Bill to the New Zealand Parliament in 1974, and was passed as the Niue Constitution Act 1974, on the condition that it would not come into force until it was confirmed by the Niuean people in a referendum. Bilingual copies of the constitution were



distributed to all households, and then the referendum was held. The proposal for Niue to become self-governing in free association with New Zealand passed with 65 per cent of votes in its favour and this status was officially assumed in October 1974 (Townend, 2003:47).

The arrangement of self-government in free association between New Zealand and both the Cook Islands and Niue entails full internal self-government for the islands while New Zealand retains responsibility for defence and some areas of foreign affairs. Citizens of the islands are citizens of New Zealand with free access to live and work in New Zealand (MFAT, 2007b).

The decolonisation processes in the Cook Islands and Niue were undertaken during the height of the overall decolonisation process in the South Pacific. The peak of decolonisation in the South Pacific was later than in the rest of the world, but, in general, the process was similar to other experiences in terms of the motives for decolonising and the processes undertaken to achieve changes in status. The process of decolonisation is a highly relevant issue in the study of development in the South Pacific and the rest of the world. The decolonisation process established many of the systems and structures that are of concern today in the developing world, particularly in the area of governance. "Issues now identified as integral to the good governance agenda were formerly integral to the decolonisation process adopted by most Western powers" (Macdonald, 1998:25).

## **Governance and development**

Governance is a difficult term to define clearly. Theorists and policymakers use different definitions. The concept of governance is applied to both the public and private sectors (public administration and corporate governance). A general definition of governance from Jreisat (2002:1) sees the concept as involving three dimensions - structures, processes and outcomes. Jreisat's focus is on the public sector, defining governance as "*how* and *why* governments are structured, *what* processes they employ in governing, and *what* results they are able to accomplish in serving their societies" (Jreisat, 2002:1). This is a useful definition as it could also be easily applied to corporate governance by

substituting corporations for governments, business operations for governing, and shareholders for societies. The term 'governance' is used in this study to mean public sector governance specifically, as this form of governance is the main concern in relation to development issues. Most donors now see development and governance as interdependent. "Human development cannot be sustained without good governance and governance cannot be sound unless it sustains human development" (UNDP, 1999:92).

Governance became a popular term in development circles in the 1990s, following the lead of the World Bank. Donors and academics came to see the lack of success of development initiatives at improving conditions in developing countries as not just the result of choosing inappropriate policies, but also as arising from the poor performance of developing countries' state institutions (Hulme & Turner, 1997:105). The World Bank was frustrated at failures of financial and technological assistance to achieve results and saw poor governance as a major factor in this failure (Larmour, 1998:1). The World Bank's definition of governance is that it is "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development" (World Bank, 1992 cited in Larmour, 1998:1). Prior to the 1990s, the distributive ("who gets what, when and how?") side of politics has received much more attention in conventional approaches to development than the constitutive side ("who sets what rules, when and how?") (Jreisat, 2002:4). In contrast, concepts of governance aim to address both distributive and constitutive sides of politics.

Critics argue that the term governance is quite broad and open to interpretation to be of much practical use. Others consider that the broadness of the concept of governance is intentional because it is "a polite way of raising awkward issues of corruption, incompetence, and abuse of power" (Larmour, 1998:5). Another criticism is that theories of governance developed in the West rarely look outside European and American cultural boundaries, and focus even less on institutions and reforms based on different political models than Western democracy (Jreisat, 2002:2).

### ***Good governance***

There is also some lack of clarity in what constitutes 'good' governance. Definitions and requirements contained in documents from donor organisations vary depending on the focus and mandate of the publishing organisation. From World Bank reports and policy statements from OECD governments, Macdonald (1998:23) summarised what donors consider to be the characteristics of 'good governance' as:

- ♦ The legitimacy of government as reflected in multi-party participatory democracy;
- ♦ The rule of law;
- ♦ Protection of human rights;
- ♦ Transparency and accountability of government process;
- ♦ The expansion of civil society; and
- ♦ Effective and efficient public sector management.

Critics argue that the good governance agenda is a form of neo-colonial control through aid conditionality (Henderson, 2002:9; Macdonald, 1998:29). The placing of conditions on aid for governance to be improved in order to foster democracy, transparency and accountability is actually the imposition of external control and an undemocratic act itself and is, therefore, self-contradicting (Henderson, 2002:9; Macdonald, 1998:29). Further criticism is that the good governance agenda "...takes insufficient account of cultural diversity, historical context, local economic circumstances or the dynamics of political process" (Macdonald, 1998:32).

In relation to development, the good governance approach is mainly to ensure that government resources and powers are used to optimum public benefit, which is more likely to be achieved if the government is fully accountable and its actions open to scrutiny (Crocombe, 2001:542). While governance concepts primarily relate to how public sector structures function, the way governments relate to business and civil society is also important, as these institutions have vital roles in making governance effective (Crocombe, 2001:543). "Non-government organisations are also acquiring greater significance because they are seen to reflect institutional pluralism and to develop civil society, both of

which, because of their capacity to act as a restraint on government, are integral to the broader governance agenda” (Macdonald, 1998:24)

In practice, attempts to improve the governance performance of the public sector usually entail administrative reform (Hulme & Turner, 1997:105). “The World Bank links its new concern with governance to its long-standing engagement with public sector reform. Other agencies link or fold it into their own distinctive standing discourses” (Larmour, 1998:6). Public sector reform involves action in some or all of the areas of restructuring, participation, human resources, accountability and transparency.

Participation by the public in shaping the activities of public bureaucracies is needed to ensure that publicly provided services are “required, desired and effective” (Hulme & Turner, 1997:113). In terms of human resources, an organisation’s most valuable resources are its staff members who perform and coordinate the tasks, organise the inputs and produce the outputs. Therefore, improving human resources and their management, through training and development, career advice and mentoring, and performance feedback, is seen as an important part of promoting good governance (Hulme & Turner, 1997:116).

Accountability refers to the holding of politicians and officials accountable for their actions and inactions, and there is no disagreement between donors and recipients that this is a desirable goal of the good governance agenda (Henderson, 2002:9). Transparency and accountability are vital to enable monitoring and constraint of the behaviour of politicians and bureaucrats to ensure that it is in the public’s best interest. Without transparency and accountability good governance is difficult to achieve because the politician’s primary interest is to retain power and the public service aims to divert as much public money as it can to its own salaries, allowances and perks (Crocombe, 2001:549). Attainment of accountability is a leading objective of most public sector reforms and involves much more than simply tackling corruption. The aim is to provide the impetus for key actors to be responsible for ensuring good public service performance (Hulme & Turner, 1997:122). Financial and

performance accountability are both important, as are the transparency (openness to scrutiny) of decision making and accountability processes. Some ways in which attempts are made to improve accountability are through the establishment and operation of Ombudsmen, Auditors General, and public accounts committees. However, “the existence of a particular tool does not necessarily mean that it is effectively used” (Hulme & Turner, 1997:124). For example, the Auditor General in Samoa was suspended for criticising government decision making processes. Several distinctive governance issues are faced by governments in developing countries. These include problems arising from neopatrimonialism, bureaucratic structures and colonial legacies.

### ***Governance in developing countries***

Traditional rulers often lacked the coercive capacity to impose rule, so their power depended on their ability to win and retain the personal loyalty of the political elite (patrimonialism). This does not fit well with modern rational-legal concepts which are inherently impersonal, with personal favours to maintain loyalty now seen as corruption (Hulme & Turner, 1997:51). Contemporary neopatrimonialism is a mixture of such patrimonial and rational-legal political institutions, leading to the right to rule being ascribed to a person\* rather than an office despite the existence of a written constitution to the contrary. Relationships of loyalty and dependence come to pervade the formal political and administrative system, and public service is ultimately undertaken not for the benefit of the public but for the public servants’ own personal wealth. The existence of such institutions undermines modern state structures by using them corruptly as a patronage system (Potter, 2000:286).

Colonialism and decolonisation left several legacies that still affect governance in developing countries today. Colonial powers often amalgamated a number of previously distinct ethnic, religious or political units to form administratively convenient colonies, leading to a lack of natural cohesion that has been one of the greatest political challenges facing new states after decolonisation (Fieldhouse, 1981:15). New political systems were also introduced on top of the artificial boundaries, since none of the tropical dependencies “possessed any tradition of parliamentary government and few perceived of public



administration as the West understood it” (Fieldhouse, 1981:25). The authoritarian nature of colonial rule also meant that most colonial people had little or no experience of democratic government (Potter, 2000:286). Colonial rule, particularly in its direct form, often destroyed or eroded indigenous systems of government and patterns of authority, thereby removing those in local societies whose leadership was needed to promote change (Fieldhouse, 1981:45). In addition to this lack of traditional leadership, most of the first generation of political leaders were not fully capable of the new global tasks thrust upon them, because they were not formally trained or experienced in management or technology, instead tending to be lawyers, teachers or doctors. Due to this lack of local expertise, newly decolonised nations came to rely on Europeans and Americans for technical advice as well as financial assistance (Betts, 2004:70). Colonies were therefore “ill prepared for the onrush of problems from without and constrained by the colonial structures and institutions found within” leading to widespread instability (Betts, 2004:66).

Colonial state structures inherited by newly independent governments were also commonly highly bureaucratic. “Bureaucracy is ubiquitous in developing countries” (Hulme & Turner, 1997:104). This can cause governance problems because bureaucratic cultures and structures tend to emphasise centralised top-down decision making, a relative autonomy in determining who gets what services and an assumption of technological superiority. This means that the public have little influence over public sector decision making and accountability and transparency are negatively affected (Hulme & Turner, 1997:113).

Many of these governance challenges are present in the South Pacific as well as the rest of the developing world. There are also some specific issues arising from the interaction between introduced systems of government and Pacific cultures which can inhibit effective governance.

### ***Governance in the South Pacific***

As in other developing countries, there is concern that poor governance in the South Pacific nations has inhibited development. Donor organisations such as



the ADB and the UNDP argue that significant improvements in incomes, health, education, transport and communications have not been seen in the South Pacific and that 'responsible stewardship' is needed for these to be achieved (ADB, 2005:232). The concern in the South Pacific has not been to build democratic government (as it has been in areas where dictatorships and authoritarian regimes have been present) because, as noted above, the nations in the region have generally performed well in terms of adhering to their democratic constitutions. The focus of the good governance agenda in the region is therefore on economic performance and government capacity (Larmour, 1998:10). Leaders of South Pacific countries have also recognised the role of effective governance, especially the importance of public accountability, in achieving development goals (UNDP, 1999:92).

The good governance agenda of international aid agencies is being applied in the South Pacific as in the rest of the developing world, in particular by the ADB and UNDP. Bilateral donors in the region, such as NZAID, also have a concern for improving governance. "The governance debate has had a growing effect on the policies of aid donors in Oceania" (Macdonald, 1998:33). An example of aid programmes related to governance in the region is the UNDP's 'Governance in the Pacific' project. This project is in operation across the South Pacific, including from the Samoa country office which services Samoa, Tokelau, Niue and the Cook Islands. The UNDP project aims to increase accountability and transparency by focusing its initiatives in the areas of effective national legislatures, human rights, democratic processes, reducing corruption, participation and regional cooperation (UNDP, 2006)

Pacific Island leaders also promote the agenda, with good governance defined at the Pacific Islands Forum leaders' summit in Kiribati in 2000 as "the practice of 'open, transparent, accountable, participatory, consultative and decisive but fair and equitable' government" (Henderson, 2002:8). The Pacific Plan, ratified in October 2005 by the Pacific Islands Forum leaders lists its good governance priorities as good leadership and accountability, harmonisation of traditional and modern values and structures, information availability and accountability

mechanisms such as audit offices, attorney generals and judicial systems (*The Pacific Plan*, 2005).

Governance issues identified in the South Pacific include weak and ineffective legislatures and a lack of political participation. Elected representatives do not regularly visit their constituencies, thereby reducing people's participation in the lawmaking process (ADB, 2005:233). There are also concerns with judicial sector capacity and conduct, and law enforcement corruption and incompetence (ADB, 2005:233-234). Specific examples of governance problems are common in the South Pacific. For example, the Niue government was reported in 2006 as having used cyclone relief funds from overseas donations to fund recurring budget and pay their public servants, rather than for the purpose for which it was provided (Phare, 2006). Corrupt actions by elected officials have often been reported in Samoa, including "a court case in 2000 in which two cabinet ministers were convicted for murder of a third revealed corruption, nepotism and decay" (Crocombe, 2001:452). Other examples of poor governance in the Pacific are found in Tonga, where the late King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV sold Tongan citizenship and passports to people from mainland China in the 1990s (Field, 2006b), and his son took over the state power company arbitrarily and paid himself and two associates exorbitant salaries (Field, 2006c). The ADB (2005:xiv) also estimates that poor governance in Papua New Guinea, Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Nauru has resulted in nearly US\$75 billion in forgone income to those countries since independence.

The colonial legacy for governance in the South Pacific is much the same as in developing countries in other regions. Colonial rule introduced a new concept of national government that was uncommon in the region previously. The decolonisation process then put in place constitutions based on the experiences and values of the metropolitan powers, in particular the Westminster style of government as explained in the decolonisation section above. Colonial administrations also left behind highly bureaucratic public sectors through the localisation process during decolonisation. In addition to the general limitations of these bureaucracies, "local history, conditions and cultures make imported institutions work in unexpected ways" (Larmour, 1998:10).

Colonial administrations introduced a new national layer of government that did not previously exist in the South Pacific. It did not interact closely with traditional forms of government, except where they were coopted into the colonial structure (Crocombe, 2001:546). This centralised and authoritarian model also did not provide much experience of western style democracy for local people to learn from (Henderson, 2002:3-4). The question of whether the Westminster system itself is part of the cause of governance problems in the South Pacific is often raised. In many South Pacific cultures decisions are ideally made based on consensus rather than majority rule. This does not fit well with Westminster government, under which it is important for there to be an opposition party within the parliament, whose role is to keep the government honest. The more emphasis there is on building consensus, the less scrutiny will be possible by the opposition of government decisions (Henderson, 2002:6).

Despite general adherence to democratic principles laid out in their constitutions, there are several common issues that affect the proper operation of democratic systems and effective governance. One problem is that it was common in the post-decolonisation South Pacific for governments to offer public sector jobs to ensure their re-election. This was a potent weapon, since governments were (and are) the main providers of paid employment in much of the region (Crocombe, 2001:547). For example, in the Cook Islands, by the early 1990s, approximately 18 per cent of the population were employed by the government, which in effect meant that most of the population was dependent on public employment (Larmour, 1998:8-9). Offering government employment in return for political loyalty led to rapid growth in the size of government bureaucracies post-decolonisation, and in the 1990s, evidence grew that South Pacific bureaucracies were over-staffed and inefficient, and most government corporations were inefficient and heavily in debt (Crocombe, 2001:547).

Neopatrimonial characteristics also provide the basis for some governance concerns in the South Pacific. Such issues occur in both the election of public officials and the operation of governance systems in terms of people's behaviour and decision making. In most South Pacific societies, the very strong family and village obligations can affect democratic processes and public decision making

and lead to poor governance by causing decisions to be made on bases other than the best interests of the general population (Crocombe, 2001:546). “On most Pacific islands entire populations can be related... Demands for loyalty to one’s clan can be every bit as strong as the demands for loyalty to the democratic process. Most frequently it is the islands’ skein of family ties that handcuffs public policy. Answering the call of one’s clan often means ignoring the voice of the majority” (Bruce, 1998:129). An example of this comes from Samoa, where it is often claimed that many ‘individual’ voters in rural villages are instructed to vote for certain candidates in order to honour undertakings that their matai or household heads have made to those candidates in return for gifts or assurances of various forms of services if they are elected (Macpherson & Macpherson, 1998:85). Intense localism can also affect political decisions in the South Pacific, where there are often strong pressures from local communities on politicians seeking to maintain their electoral support. This can result in limiting the supply of public goods like roads and health in favour of small local projects (Larmour, 1998:18). In order for governance to be effective, political and policy decisions need to be made based on national and public interest. However, in the South Pacific the traditional priority for kin and community often conflicts with national interest (Crocombe, 2001:546).

The focus on kin relationships and obligations combines with a strong South Pacific tradition of gift-giving to cause problems in the decision making behaviour of public and elected officials. After decolonisation in the region, these indigenous models came to play in national governments and public services, with personal connections and reciprocal gift-giving often compromising the objectivity and impersonality of national governments. In modern governance systems, however, these actions are now seen as amounting to nepotism, bribery, corruption, bias, favouritism or ethnic prejudice (Crocombe, 2001:546).

Other aspects of South Pacific cultures can also lead to governance challenges. For example, in many countries there are cultural constraints against public confrontation, which can limit the debate necessary to make decisions and implement policies. “A confrontational style is not, generally, culturally

acceptable in the islands” (Bruce, 1998:129). Another example is that good governance “stresses the need to respect and uphold human rights and rule of law. From a Pacific perspective the emphasis on individual human rights clashes with the more traditional concerns for collective – or village – rights” (Henderson, 2002:9).

These illustrations from the South Pacific are examples of governance challenges that are also be found in many developing countries. National governments were introduced in colonial times and enshrined during the decolonisation process. The government systems and processes put in place are now seen to contribute to poor governance, for example through their lack of compatibility with local cultures, which often distort introduced structures so that they do not operate as would be expected to in developed countries.

Previous experiences elsewhere in the world have built up the formal decolonisation framework in which Tokelau’s process is being undertaken. Problems arising from prior examples of decolonisation have also been learned from, enabling the process in Tokelau to take a slightly different course, in particular in relation to governance structures and constitutional development. Governance challenges present in Tokelau that are similar to those elsewhere in the South Pacific may have had an influence on the outcome of the self-determination referendum.

## **Chapter summary**

This chapter has given an overview of the issues raised in the literature on colonialism, decolonisation and governance. These three topics are all interrelated and are highly relevant considerations in relation to development. Colonial rule created new territories and then introduced new government systems. Decolonisation processes formalised and entrenched these systems, which are now being seen to have affected the achievement of development goals. Local contexts in decolonised developing countries, including those in the South Pacific, affect the ways in which these introduced governance structures function in practice. Processes and issues relating to colonialism, decolonisation and governance make up the global context in which the



decolonisation process in Tokelau was undertaken. Tokelau, like most other developing countries, has been colonised, is in the process of decolonisation, and experiences challenges in achieving 'good' governance.

The following chapter presents the fieldwork methodology undertaken in order to investigate the factors that Tokelauans living in the islands see as having contributed to the referendum outcome.

## Chapter Three: Research in Tokelau

The fieldwork for this research was undertaken in the three villages of Tokelau during July and August 2006. There were several reasons for choosing to study Tokelau. Through existing Tokelauan acquaintances an interest in the atolls was already present. Interest in the self-determination issue was triggered by meeting the then Administrator of Tokelau, Neil Walter, in early 2005, who explained the plans for the referendum and suggested that it was potentially an interesting development studies thesis topic. Mr Walter also offered his assistance 'at the New Zealand end' through access to files at MFAT relating to the decolonisation process in Tokelau.

This chapter outlines the logistical (travel, accommodation) arrangements for the fieldwork, the characteristics and selection of participants, the semi-structured interview method that was utilised, the conduct of those interviews in the field, considerations relating to outside researchers in Tokelau, and the need to maintain a non-aligned position in the villages throughout the fieldwork. Challenges encountered while undertaking fieldwork in Tokelau and how they were addressed are covered throughout the chapter. These include being an outsider, transport, maintaining neutrality, language, and time management. Ethical issues such as participant consent, reciprocity and power imbalances are addressed within relevant sections.

### **Field logistics**

Travel from Apia to Tokelau was undertaken on the ship MV Tokelau departing on 5 July 2006 and arriving in Nukunonu late in the evening of 6 July 2006. Originally, it was intended to only do a 'round trip' which would involve staying on the same voyage and only disembarking for a day or two at each village to interview key leaders and officials in each village. With the encouragement of academic supervisors and Tokelauan friends in New Zealand, the decision was made to stay longer in Tokelau. The longer stay in Tokelau enabled more people outside government to be interviewed, and a broader perspective obtained in the data, and also first hand experience of life in Tokelau. As May (2001:144) argues, "a fuller understanding can be achieved only by witnessing the context

of the event or circumstances to which people refer". The Tokelau Unit at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Wellington arranged contact with the Tokelau Office in Apia (TALO) in order to organise the passage to Tokelau and permission to stay in each village.

Seven weeks in total were spent in Tokelau. This included twelve days in Nukunonu, followed by fourteen days in Fakaofu, and then ten days in Atafu. The majority of research interviews were undertaken during these stays. The initial periods in each village were followed by a return to Nukunonu for several days of holiday, and then finally to Fakaofu to attend the General Fono, before returning to Apia. It was not possible to spend exactly the same amount of time in each village, mostly due to the boat schedule. In Atafu, there was also the situation of the host family leaving to attend the workshops before the General Fono in Fakaofu, and not being comfortable with a young woman staying in their house alone. This was not a problem, as by that stage most of the planned interviews had been completed.

### ***Accommodation***

During all of the time spent in Tokelau it was a privilege to be able to stay with local people. Staying with local families was important both for the research and for personal reasons. The decision to do this rather than staying in guest houses was partly due to the very limited availability of this type of accommodation in Tokelau. The decision to stay with local people was also based on a feeling that it would not be good to be alone at night in a motel room and that it would be possible to gain more understanding of Tokelau by staying with families. Marie Price, an American geography professor who has undertaken extensive research in Latin America, also advises this approach: "Hotel life for a lone woman researcher can be especially isolating, and it can result in much unwanted attention... Living in homes with families offers a completely different and far superior experience" (Price, 1991:147).

Most of the people providing accommodation were friends or family of contacts in New Zealand, who assisted with the arrangements to stay with them. Others were arranged once in Tokelau through contacts made there. Although it was

not planned that way, it worked out that most of the people who offered accommodation were public servants in some capacity, which was not surprising as the government is the main source of paid employment in Tokelau. The households providing the researcher with accommodation were quite modern, with televisions and freezers and other appliances, which was also not surprising because all of the hosts had lived overseas at some stage in their lives and had family living overseas. All of the families were extremely generous and open, and were also helpful with and interested in the research. Staying with village families raised one concern that had to be taken into consideration in undertaking the research. Every family was known in the villages to be either for or against the self-government proposal. It was important when interacting with participants to assure them that care would be taken to protect their confidentiality, by not discussing the interviews with hosts and not leaving notes lying around at home.

### ***Transport***

Arranging transport to and around Tokelau was a challenge. "Doing fieldwork in Tokelau is not easy and should be planned tentatively, because of the unpredictability of boat schedules and other factors outside the researcher's control" (Kalolo, 1995:12). Fortunately during this fieldwork the seas and tides were accommodating, with rough seas only encountered on the return trip to Samoa and arrival at each atoll on schedule the majority of the time. One of the 'other factors' mentioned by Kalolo is that there are sometimes gaps in communication between the Apia office and the villages, and this was experienced on more than one occasion during the fieldwork. There is a transport officer in each village as well as one in Apia and coordination between them can be difficult, so even if a person is 'booked' on a particular voyage, this should not be assumed to be definite. An example of this was not being included on passenger list for the return trip to Samoa, despite previous confirmation. The boat schedules can also change at the last minute for unexplained reasons, and leave early without warning or much later than expected or even not at all, necessitating constant checking with transport officers for updates.

From these and other events, two key lessons for doing fieldwork in Tokelau were learned: the need for patience (everything generally seems to work out eventually, it just may take longer than planned or expected), and persistence (you have to keep on asking what is happening, otherwise you risk not finding out about changes to schedules, or may miss out on village events).

### ***Local relationships***

The fieldwork in Tokelau would not have been such a good experience without the generous assistance of local people. As Price (1991:144) notes, “we rely on the kindness of strangers to conduct our field studies” which was especially true in this case. In each village the researcher was introduced to a young woman who people thought would be able to assist with the fieldwork. The assistance provided by these women included introductions to participants, arranging interviews, and acting as guides around the villages. As well as their acting as informal research assistants, good friendships were developed with all three of these women. The support these ‘assistants’ provided proved invaluable because the advice from villagers was that in Tokelau it would be inappropriate to simply approach an unknown person and ask to interview him or her. In some cases being approached by a local assistant made it easier for people to refuse to be interviewed, which was entirely acceptable as it was not intended or desired to force anyone to talk. The research was explained to each assistant before beginning to arrange interviews. It was especially important for them to understand the need to explain to participants that the research was not being conducted on behalf of any organisation and about confidentiality provisions, which the assistants often found was easier to achieve in Tokelauan.

Building relationships with people is vital for successful fieldwork. “The most important thing one can bring to the field is luck... but luck usually comes from building contacts and relationships in the places where we do our research, by talking with people about our work and involving them in it, and by finding ways to give back to the people who help us” (Price, 1991:144). Building relationships with the three assistants and also with host families was very helpful in terms of gaining information about people in the villages, how they were related to each other, and their personalities. Advice and answers to



questions about Tokelau culture and sharing of general village gossip by both assistants and families was also useful. The relationships built during the fieldwork in Tokelau, and the information gained from the assistance of families and friends, enabled some awareness of the histories and backgrounds of most participants prior to their interviews.

## **Research participants**

### ***Selection and consent***

The starting point for selecting participants was a list of names of people who the then Administrator suggested would be useful informants, which had also been added to by Tokelauan friends in New Zealand. Once in Tokelau, host families, assistants and participants were also asked for suggestions of people who would be useful or important to interview. Initial contact with participants was either through a phone call by an assistant, who then escorted the researcher to appointments and made introductions, or by assistants introducing the researcher in person, who then set up the appointment personally. A few people declined to be interviewed to the assistant, some out of concern for their jobs despite confidentiality assurances. Some people agreed to be interviewed but then did not attend arranged interviews or were evasive in setting an exact time and place to be interviewed.

The purpose of the research, confidentiality and anonymity were explained at the time of requests to participate and again when participants were presented with the information sheet at the start of each interview. May (2001:128) argues that ensuring participants understand what is expected of them, and what they can expect in return, is important both ethically and to ensure quality of data. If a person does not understand the objectives of the study and their role in it, their answers may be affected (May, 2001:129). Ethically, people should fully understand what they are consenting to when agreeing to become participants and what will happen to the information they provide. Gaining consent is required to meet good research principles (Dwyer & Limb, 2001:1). In the Tokelau fieldwork, the most important issue for people to agree to be interviewed seemed to have been assurance that their responses would be confidential. This assurance included that participants' responses would not be

discussed with anyone else, and that no direct quotes, only summary statements, would be used in the final text. It was felt that there would be a potential risk to participants if such quotes were to be used. This was because in the small Tokelau villages it was impossible to keep the identity of participants a secret, since movements were highly visible and of interest to people. There would then be a risk of a participant being identified as having expressed a potentially controversial opinion or providing sensitive information. On several occasions during the fieldwork, it was noted by villagers and participants that the referendum outcome was a highly sensitive issue, and that there had been some bitter recriminations and 'finger pointing' immediately after the referendum.

The decision not to quote participants, even anonymously, was a personal one, not based on participants' stated preferences, and was made while in the field. As Scheyvens et al. (2003:146) argue, "it would be wrong to assume that all participants want anonymity" and part of the consent process should be to check their preference directly with them. In hindsight, choosing not to ask people specifically if they wished to remain anonymous may have been an error in the fieldwork practice. Having made this choice, however, it is now safer to err on the side of caution and not identify any participants or include information that could make participants identifiable to the small Tokelau community. It was decided not to use the written consent forms, as verbal consent to participate was considered sufficient and the best approach in an originally oral society. The interview setup was generally open, casual and relaxed and requesting a signature could have turned it into a more formal event.

### ***Participants' characteristics***

In total, 37 interviews were undertaken in Tokelau. All participants were Tokelauan, although most had lived outside the islands at some time in their lives and some were born overseas. A breakdown of participants by village and gender is presented in Table 3.1 below. Fourteen interviews were carried out in Nukunonu, thirteen in Fakaofu and ten in Atafu. The number of Atafu participants was lower than in the other two villages due to the boat schedule, as

mentioned above in the field logistics section, and also due to participation in the Women’s Day holiday social and sporting events that were held for three days during the period spent there. This event involved most of the village and took up everyone’s time and energy for the three days over which it was held.

*Table 3.1: Participants by location and gender*

	Nukunonu	Fakaofu	Atafu	Total
Women	4	4	4	12
Men	10	9	6	25
Total	14	13	10	37

The holiday period in Atafu was one instance in which time management was a challenge during the fieldwork. Village and family events such as concerts, holidays, festivals, school parents’ days, picnics (camping out) also regularly took up either, or often both, participants’ and researcher’s time. Village work such as regular *taupulega* meetings, official visitors, from for example the UNDP or New Zealand, work on construction of a new house, and unloading the cargo from the boat further limited the time that participants had available to be interviewed. However, while at times delays were frustrating, the target minimum of ten interviews in each village was still met.

Another specific occasion when there was a period in which interviews could not be undertaken was encountered in Fakaofu. On arrival in Fakaofu, it was discovered that, due to a communication lapse between the Apia and village offices, permission to be present in the village and to undertake research had not been granted by the *taupulega*. The lack of permission meant it was necessary to wait to attend the next *taupulega* meeting, at which explanation was requested for how the error had occurred. The *toeaina* at the meeting also asked about the researcher and the research topic, and for assurance of awareness of and consideration for the sensitivity of the issues surrounding the referendum. After these explanations were made, permission to start undertaking interviews was granted.

Of the 37 total interview participants, twelve were women and 25 were men. A possible reason for the lower number of female than male participants was that it was more difficult to set up interviews with women because they were more reluctant and more likely to agree to participate but then not show up. This was a potential weakness in this research, but no major difference in opinions expressed was found between the women and men interviewed, and it is not therefore considered that gender was a major factor behind different explanations for the referendum outcome.

All of the participants spoke English well and most of them had been away from Tokelau at some stage for education or employment. Not having included any non-English speakers was a limitation of the research, however it was considered by the researcher and advised by Tokelauans that it would not be a good idea to try and use a translator during interviews. This was for two main reasons. The first is that the research topic was extremely sensitive in Tokelau and every family and individual was on one side of the issue or the other. It would be difficult to ensure that any translator was neutral, and this could affect both what the participant felt comfortable relating, and what the translator passed on to the researcher. In Tokelau, there is also a strong culture of gossip, and it would be difficult to ensure the confidentiality of responses with another person present during the interview.

Despite the limitation posed by the language barrier, a wide range of people from different positions and occupations within the villages were interviewed. These include public servants, politicians, teachers, health professionals, village maintenance workers, and small business operators. The age of participants ranged from the mid-20s to the 70s. Younger (18-25) people were missed, which is another limitation, but their names were not even suggested by host families or assistants, and none expressed much interest in the research. This was not a major concern, as it was related by villagers on several occasions that people tended to vote as family units. Therefore, the younger people were likely to have followed their elders.

## **Research methods**

Qualitative research such as the fieldwork undertaken in Tokelau “seeks to understand the world through interacting with, empathising with and interpreting the actions and perceptions of its actors” (Brockington & Sullivan, 2003:57). Qualitative methodologies, such as individual interviews, group discussions, and participant observation, are used to discover people’s understanding, knowledge and feelings about a particular event or experience (Dwyer & Limb, 2001:1). The research method utilised during the fieldwork in Tokelau was one of semi-structured interviewing.

### ***Semi-structured interviews***

An interview is “a data gathering method in which there is a spoken exchange of information” (Dunn, 2000:51). Interviews can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured. Interviewing is “an excellent method of gaining access to information about events, opinions and experiences... [and to] understand how meanings differ among people” (Dunn, 200:52). Since this research is about a specific event and individual people’s opinions about it, interviewing was the ideal technique to obtain the required information. Further qualitative research techniques such as group workshops were not utilised because with such a sensitive issue people might not feel comfortable expressing their views in groups. In addition, the consultation undertaken in the build-up to the referendum predominantly involved group discussion, so people may have been tired of attending meetings. Due to the time constraints mentioned above, it would have also been difficult to find times that everyone could attend. Interviews are also “a method that shows respect for and empowers those people who provide the data... each informant can advise you as a researcher about events or opinions in their own words” (Dunn, 2000:52-53).

Semi-structured interviewing was chosen over structured or unstructured formats. A semi-structured interview is one that “has some degree of predetermined order but still ensures flexibility in the ways issues are addressed by the informant” (Dunn, 200:52). It is content-focused and involves use of a set of guiding questions to provide some structure, and “ordered but flexible questioning” (Dunn, 200:61). It is neither as rigid as a structured interview nor



as open as an unstructured interview. The semi-structured form was chosen because it would allow participants to raise their own issues rather than be limited to those chosen by the interviewer, while at the same time providing some consistency between interviews for ease of analysis and drawing out themes (May, 2001:123).

### ***Interview schedule***

As part of the preparation for the fieldwork, a list of five questions was developed to be asked during interviews. As Dunn argues, “an interview guide is a list of general issues you want to cover in an interview... usually associated with semi-structured interviewing... An interview schedule is a list of carefully worded questions” (Dunn, 2000:54). By Dunn’s definition, the list prepared prior to departure in this case was an interview schedule, as it was composed of questions, but in practice it was used more as what he calls a guide. The questions became prompts or general topics during the interview rather than being strictly followed.

Semi-structured interviewing uses questions which the interviewer sees as relevant to their research question (Dunn, 2000:61). The five questions in the schedule prepared for the research on Tokelau’s referendum were:

1. What do you understand that self-government would mean for Tokelau?  
And for you personally?
2. Do you think there is anything that New Zealand should have done differently in the lead up to the referendum? If yes, what?
3. Do you think there is anything that Tokelau’s leaders should have done differently in the lead up to the referendum? If yes, what?
4. Do you have any other/general ideas as to why the self-government proposal failed?
5. What were your reasons for voting the way that you did, or why do you think people voted for/against the proposal?

The interview schedule was modified as the fieldwork proceeded. An additional question asking whether there were any other issues or information about Tokelau that the participant thought would aid in understanding the

referendum outcome or just that might be of general interest to the researcher was inserted. Question Two was eliminated because it was decided that the focus of the research was not on New Zealand's role. Several people either did not address the issue or simply said that there was nothing different New Zealand could have done that would have changed the referendum outcome. In many cases the participants said at the start of the interview how they had voted, and then their opinions of self-government were offered as reasons for why they had voted that way. Due to the sensitive nature of the issues, people were not asked how they had voted if they did not volunteer that information.

### ***Fieldwork interviews in Tokelau***

Interviews lasted for twenty minutes to one hour, with most taking around half an hour. The interviews were held at a wide variety of times and places – it was important to ensure that the participants were comfortable with the location and not too inconvenienced by the time. Some interviews were undertaken while participants were at work in the offices, village workers tended to be interviewed at night in their homes after their day's work was finished, and some women were met with in their homes during the day. Scheyvens et al. (2003:151) argue that “we can make efforts to reduce power imbalances by placing ourselves in positions in which our informants are comfortable”. In order to ensure participants' comfort, interview locations included people's offices or homes, empty meeting rooms, the houses of host families, under a tree, during a cricket match – wherever the participant preferred. Other ways to ensure participants' comfort and show respect include dressing cleanly and tidily and respecting local standards, and displaying genuine interest and concern (Scheyvens et al., 2003:151). All of these strategies were utilised in the research in Tokelau. However, in many cases it was not considered that there was a power imbalance perceived by participants in Tokelau. If anything, the imbalance was against the researcher, who was younger and less knowledgeable about Tokelau than the participants, many of whom held respected positions within their community.

The interviews were deliberately very casual, as it was desired that people felt able to express themselves freely and did not feel intimidated. Each interview

began with presentation of the information sheet to the participant, re-introduction of the research, and explanation of confidentiality. When the audio recorder was used, participants were also asked if they minded their interview being taped. What was expected of the participants was then explained, and an overview of all the questions on the interview guide was given. People usually then just started talking and the guide was used for prompts to make sure all the questions/topics were covered. Most people seemed very open and had a lot to say. Each interview ended with thanking the participant for the information they had provided, and also usual general conversation about the weather or the boat or the cricket for example. It was felt that a good rapport was formed with most participants, which Dunn (2000:68) says is important as such rapport “may increase the level of understanding you have about the informant and what they are saying.”

Initially a digital audio recorder was used during every interview in addition to taking notes. Both audio recording and note-taking have advantages and disadvantages, so it can be useful to combine these strategies when recording an interview (Dunn, 2000:71). Advantages include that it allows the interviewer to record non-verbal reactions and gestures that may be missed while looking down to take notes, and that recordings guard against the researcher using their own words rather than those of their participants (May, 2001:138). It was a concern not to need to focus on taking notes and maybe not being able to write fast enough to get all the information down, so the audio record was used to review the notes. However, after about a week of interviewing, the recorder was used less often and eventually was not used at all. It was found when checking the notes against the audio files while in Tokelau that the notes were accurate, so the audio was not required. While participants agreed to be recorded, a Tokelauan said subsequently that people probably do not really like it but may have been too polite to refuse. Dunn (2000:72) and May (2001:137) agree that using a tape recorder during interviews can be intimidating and inhibiting for participants, so they may not respond freely. Another disadvantage of recording is that transcribing audio files into hard copies is a very time-consuming process (May, 2001:138).

## Researching as an outsider

Being a *palagi* from New Zealand situated the researcher as an outsider in the Tokelau context. Being an outsider can be difficult in Tokelau. Ingjerd Hoëm, who undertook linguistic research in Tokelau in the 1980s and 1990s, noted that “many people living in Tokelau experience themselves as having a certain ethnic and cultural identity in common which sets them apart from others, and which many of them maintain that no outsider can ever become part of” (Hoëm, 1995:210). In addition, negative attitudes in Tokelau towards outsiders ‘coming in and telling us what to do’ were related by participants during the fieldwork. Even Tokelauans who were born and raised in New Zealand said that they found it difficult to return to the islands and fit in and feel part of the community. In some ways, it was actually easier for a *palagi* outsider to visit Tokelau than for someone of Tokelauan heritage, as people had lower expectations of a *palagi*’s cultural knowledge and language ability, so they were more likely to offer advice or correct cultural mistakes.

Writers on research methodologies such as England (1994:80) argue that “the researcher’s positionality and biography directly affect fieldwork”. In the case of this fieldwork in Tokelau, previous experiences of living and travelling outside New Zealand allowed the fieldwork experience to be approached with an open mind, and there was also some prior knowledge of personal reactions in cross-cultural situations and strategies to cope with those reactions. Pre-existing personal connections in the islands were extremely useful in arranging accommodation and in meeting people who could offer assistance. These connections along with participation in village sporting and social events were also good icebreakers for everyday conversation, and provided something in common with many people, or at least something to talk about. This helped people feel more comfortable with the researcher, and helped in finding out more about who was who in the village and feeling more comfortable there.

From the experiences discussed in this chapter, ‘betweenness’ is an appropriate formulation of this research experience in Tokelau. “Betweenness stresses that as people we are always simultaneously separate from, yet related to, one another” (Tooke, 2000:218). While definitely an outsider, there were also

factors in common with people and relationships through family and friends, so the researcher was not a complete stranger. This position was found to be useful, because as Hoëm also found, “Learning always occurs in the gaps between the world, as one knows it from previous experience, and the world as it is encountered during fieldwork” (Hoëm, 2004). Being an outsider was not inevitably negative in terms of this particular research in any case. Several participants commented on the role of an outside researcher. Some said it was good to be able to talk anonymously and confidentially as they feel that they could not express themselves openly in the villages. Others said it was good for an outsider to ask questions about the referendum in order to try and get to the ‘truth’, because people knew the researcher had no hidden agenda, so they were able to relate things they could not say to each other. The outside researcher was also seen by participants to allow a fresh look at the issues to be taken, by someone who had not been involved in the process.

### **Maintaining a non-aligned position**

Ensuring that the researcher was not perceived during interviews (or in the villages in general) to be aligned with either supporters or critics of the proposal was an ongoing challenge. A non-aligned position was important to enable people to talk willingly and openly during interviews. For example, at several times in Atafu the researcher was asked to try and help in some way with ‘the Pastor situation’ (see Chapter One for information about this situation) or about the likelihood of New Zealand intervention. In those instances, both the limited scope of the research and the limited capacity to assist since the researcher was ‘just a student’ were explained. While ensuring not to appear to have taken sides on the issue of self-government, awareness was also required that, as Skelton (2001:89) argues, researchers “are not neutral, scientific observers, untouched by the emotional and political contexts of places where we do our research”. It was very difficult to remain detached when hearing about some of the current events in the village by those directly and personally involved and affected. Maintenance of a non-aligned position appeared to have been successful, however, with people on both sides of the self-government debate continuing to offer their opinions on the situation openly during interviews. Participants’ openness may have been because each participant was trying to



convince the researcher of the correctness of a particular point of view. Nevertheless, it was positive that participants felt comfortable expressing their feelings on the issues with an outsider at all. Care was also taken to avoid mention of Neil Walter and the archival research undertaken at MFAT, so as not to appear to be an agent of the New Zealand government.

People often asked during interviews and in general conversation what the researcher's position on self-government for Tokelau was, and what their reaction to the outcome was. The likelihood of these questions arising was anticipated before arrival in Tokelau, so a neutral response in such situations had been formulated. The response was that the first reaction on hearing the result was that it should have been 'yes' and therefore disappointment, but that this was a New Zealander's view, and that as more was learned from talking to people in the islands the less certain this opinion became. This response seemed to be accepted by those who asked. It was the researcher's private view that to be its own self-determined nation would be a great thing in itself for Tokelau and could bring many benefits and opportunities, but also that what the researcher or any other outsider thinks is irrelevant since it is for Tokelauans alone to decide their future and status.

## **Data analysis**

The first step in analysis of the data obtained during the fieldwork in Tokelau was to assign a code to each participant. Although direct quotes of participants are not presented in Chapter Four, some summary statements and paraphrasing of responses are used that require reference back to interview data. The codes are composed of a letter, indicating the participant's opinion (expressed during interviews) of self-government for Tokelau in general and the referendum proposal in particular, and a number assigned according to the chronological order of interviews. For example, a participant who was generally critical of self-government and the proposal, and was the eighteenth interview undertaken, was coded as C18. The format for referencing in the text is: (Participant C18). The attitude codes and the number of participants assigned to each are presented in Table 3.2 below. The method of grouping participants by their overall attitudes to self-government was chosen because it had been

noticed during the fieldwork that people on each side of the debate would tend to offer similar arguments in their interview responses. In the data presented in Chapter Four, it is noted whether an argument was made by one of these groups in particular or by participants in general.

*Table 3.2: Participant codes*

Code	Critical (C)	Supportive (S)	Ambivalent (A)	Total
Number of participants	16	19	2	37

The second data analysis step taken was to list all the different reasons suggested by participants for the referendum outcome, as recalled by the researcher, and then to group similar or related factors into themes. The interview notes were then coded according to the themes of local politics, culture and understanding, readiness for self-government, and referendum arrangements. Jackson (2001:202,211) calls this the use of ‘constructed’ and ‘selective’ codes which are “abstracted from the data by the researcher... [and] focus on categories that the researcher has defined as central to the project”. Responses coded as falling under each theme were then collated into a single document. After this exercise, it was decided that the education programme should be included in culture and understanding, and that the other referendum arrangements had been seen by participants as having only small impact, so did not form a main theme. Effects of the arrangements on the referendum outcome were mentioned by only a few participants, and were not supported by media or official reports. It is important to note that the data analysis process undertaken does not aim to produce a definitive ‘truth’ of the reasons underlying the referendum outcome, but to explore and interpret Tokelauans’ ideas of those factors. In fact, as Mohammad (2001:113) argues, “knowledges produced are always versions” because of the interpretive role of the researcher in collating and analysing the data.

As Scheyvens et al. (2003:139) point out, “doing ethical research in a foreign setting... is about building mutually beneficial relationships with people you meet in the field and about acting in a sensitive and respectful manner”. In

terms of such reciprocity, a summary of research findings will be adapted from Chapter Four and sent to those participants and others who expressed interest in receiving such information during interviews. The summary may also be sent to village offices for their and the *taupulegas*' information, and to be made publicly available if each villages' leaders and officials consider it appropriate. While it is hoped that the research findings could be useful to inform work towards the next referendum, it is probable that none of the data it contains will be new to Tokelauans since, after all, they were the people who originally provided the information.

The following chapter gives an overview of Tokelau's self-determination referendum, the referendum outcome and reactions to this outcome in the islands, and presents the results of the analysis of the interview data from the fieldwork in Tokelau.

## Chapter Four: The Referendum

Tokelau's referendum on self-determination was held from 11-15 February 2006, and was preceded by an education and information programme undertaken by the Council for Ongoing Government and a team from Apia. This programme involved visits to the villages by a team from Apia and the Council for Ongoing Government, who held workshops and distributed written material. The referendum was observed by representatives of the UN, New Zealand, and media reporters. The outcome of the referendum was that the two-thirds majority threshold for the proposal to pass was not met, so Tokelau is still currently a territory of New Zealand. Media and officials reported fear of change, local divisions, mistrust of self-government provisions, influence from expatriate Tokelauans, 'campaigning', and a lack of understanding as the main factors behind this result.

The research outcomes of the fieldwork in Tokelau, the explanations for the referendum outcome as given by the 37 participants in fieldwork interviews, are presented in this chapter. Factors seen by participants to have affected the referendum's outcome were found to fall under three main themes: local divisions and rivalries, lack of understanding of the proposal, and doubts regarding Tokelau's readiness to govern itself. The first section of this chapter sets out the details of the referendum including the practical arrangements, the proposal that was voted on, and media and official reports on the result at the time. The second section presents the explanations for the outcome given by Tokelauans as participants in the fieldwork interviews and in other sources.

### **Tokelau's self-determination referendum**

#### ***The proposal***

Voters in the referendum were asked to agree with (vote 'yes') or reject (vote 'no') the proposal that "Tokelau become a self governing state in Free Association with New Zealand on the basis of the Constitution and as in the draft Treaty" (Government of Tokelau, 2005). The Constitution of Tokelau ('the Constitution') and the draft Treaty of Free Association Between Tokelau and New Zealand ('the draft Treaty'), along with their supporting documents, are

usually referred to by officials in both the islands and New Zealand as ‘the package’.

The Constitution in the package had been agreed on at the April 2005 General Fono. One change was made at the August Fono, removing Olosega from the definition of Tokelau and only mentioning it in the preamble (Hooper, 2007:20). As explained in Chapter One, in the 1980s, Tokelauan claims over the atoll of Olosega had been ceded to the United States by New Zealand, in consultation with Tokelau’s leaders. Some in Tokelau still regard Olosega as ‘stolen’ and attempted to make it an issue during the buildup to the referendum, although the issue does not impact directly on the question of Tokelau’s political status.

The Constitution sets out Tokelau’s vision for its future and brings together formally all the existing laws regarding how Tokelau is run, including those relating to the General Fono (composition, meetings, executive powers), Council for Ongoing Government, law making, courts (law commissioners, High Court, Court of Appeal), sources of law, public service, finance, land, human rights, and citizenship (*Constitution of Tokelau*, 2005). Details of the constitutional development process in Tokelau are set out in Chapter One.

The text of the draft Treaty was approved by the General Fono in August 2005 and endorsed by the New Zealand Cabinet in November 2005 (MFAT, 2006c:7). “The document was composed originally in Wellington and then repeatedly refined and adapted to suit each partner’s point of view” (Kalolo, 2006:5). The purpose of the Treaty is to set out the rights and obligations of both parties under free association. The draft Treaty has thirteen articles, which cover the relationship of free association; culture and heritage; citizenship; economic support and infrastructure development support; administrative, technical and specialist support; emergency and disaster relief; defence, security and maritime surveillance; the Tokelau International Trust Fund; international relations; consultation; and change of status.



The draft Treaty describes the relationship of free association as one of ongoing cooperation and consultation between Tokelau and New Zealand based on a “spirit of partnership” between equals (*Draft Treaty*, 2005:Article 1). Regular meetings between the two countries to discuss matters of concern raised by either country would be required (*Draft Treaty*, 2005:Article 10). After the Treaty came into force, Tokelau would have the right to reconsider its political status (independence or integration being the other options) at any time in the future and New Zealand would be required to support Tokelau’s choice of new status (*Draft Treaty*, 2005:Article 11).

Under the draft Treaty, Tokelauans would remain New Zealand citizens with ongoing rights to reside and work in New Zealand (*Draft Treaty*, 2005:Article 3). Foreign affairs and defence would continue to be the responsibility of New Zealand but only to be “discharged at Tokelau’s request and with its consent” (*Draft Treaty*, 2005:Article 7). Although Tokelau would have its own legal international personality under the draft Treaty and would thus have the right to enter into its own treaties with other nations, a “common approach” with New Zealand would still be required, for example, adherence to UN agreements on human rights (*Draft Treaty*, 2005:Article 9)

New Zealand would be required under the draft Treaty to continue to provide budgetary support and financial assistance for infrastructure development to Tokelau indefinitely (*Draft Treaty*, 2005:Article 4), although no exact level of such support is specified or guaranteed within the provisions. New Zealand provision of funding for disaster relief and prevention is also guaranteed (*Draft Treaty*, 2005:Article 6). Commitment would be made under the draft Treaty for both countries to continue contributions to the Tokelau International Trust Fund (*Draft Treaty*, 2005:Article 8). Public service delivery would remain the responsibility of the Tokelauan government but New Zealand officials would continue to advise Tokelau’s public service if Tokelau requested assistance (*Draft Treaty*, 2005:Article 5). The draft Treaty also recognises the importance of the Tokelauan culture and contains a commitment by New Zealand to support the retention of that culture, although how this will be achieved is not

specified, only that it will be an “agreed programme” (*Draft Treaty*, 2005:Article 2).

### ***Referendum arrangements***

The decision to hold a referendum on the proposal was formally made at the August 2005 General Fono, with a planned date for November of that year for the vote and the establishment of the Referendum Rules (Hooper, 2007:20; MFAT, 2006c:7). However, the translation of the Constitution and draft Treaty were not completed in time for a November vote, so in November 2006 the General Fono set 11-15 February 2006 as the official date (General Fono, 2005). Another reason for the delay was that the New Zealand Cabinet had not approved the final draft of the Treaty prior to the November 2005 general election, so it was necessary to wait for the new government to be formed for the Treaty to be approved by New Zealand (Hooper, 2007:23).

The *Self-determination Referendum Rules 2005* established a referendum commission composed of the *faipule* of each atoll and two further representatives from each, which was tasked with overseeing the registration, publicity, voting and counting procedures, and set out the details of those processes. People were eligible to vote if they were 18 years of age or older and had lived in the islands for at least three months since 2004 (Government of Tokelau, 2005). The *Referendum Rules* also formally established the two thirds majority requirement: “Tokelau will be declared to be self-determined in accordance with the United Nations requirements if and only if the affirmative votes cast by all voters in the Referendum is more than a two thirds majority of the valid votes” (Government of Tokelau, 2005).

The two-thirds majority requirement may seem high compared to the normal democratic standard of a simple majority of 51 per cent, but Tokelau’s leadership agreed to it because they recognised that if that level was reached then the referendum result would be clearly beyond question as reflecting the wishes of the Tokelauan people (Hooper, 2007:20-21). While it was apparently not a topic of much debate at the time it was agreed to (Kalolo, 2006:6), this two thirds majority requirement became an issue when the proposal failed, with

many arguing that it was unrealistic given the existing divisions in the villages, which several participants reported in the fieldwork interviews, even though it was not a specific question. Some also saw it as Tokelau being told what to do by the UN.

One report to New Zealand officials by Tokelauan officials had 615 people registered out of an estimated 937 eligible. This meant a registration rate of 66 per cent, but because the last census was undertaken in 2001 and there is continual movement in and out of the atolls, it was difficult to calculate the exact proportion of eligible people that did register, and therefore no official figure is available. Two other independent calculations estimated voter registration to have been around 70 per cent (Hooper, 2007:24). A registration rate of 66 per cent was seen as not unusual by international referendum standards. For example, in Iraq's referendum on its new constitution in 2005 registration was 60 per cent of those eligible to vote (BBC, 2005) and in East Timor's independence referendum in 1999 registration was 75 per cent (BBC, 1999).

Public consultation and education on self-determination was undertaken during 2005, with at least four major visits during the year to present and discuss various parts of the package. The Apia-based Tokelau Law Team, in some cases with the Council for Ongoing Government, and with support from a New Zealand legal advisor, carried out these consultations. The legal team undertook intensive consultation on the Constitution in April 2005, meeting with the *taupulega*, *aumaga*, teachers, and *fatupaepae* in each village to discuss the contents of the Constitution in detail. The legal team also presented the idea of the Treaty and a discussion document explaining what it might cover and the main commitments involved on either side (Tokelau Law Team, 2005a).

The Council for Ongoing Government, with the legal team in support, took the draft Treaty to village councils in August 2005, and explained and discussed each article in detail (Tokelau Law Team, 2005b). The draft Constitution and draft Treaty, written in both English and Tokelauan, were distributed to each household in the atolls, and also posted on the Tokelauan government's website

once translation was complete in late 2005 (Hooper, 2007:21). Final workshops and information sessions on the draft Treaty and Constitution were held in all three villages by the law team and Council for Ongoing Government in November and December 2005. Voter education on how the voting process would work was undertaken in early 2006. The villages had also had the chance to comment on the Referendum Rules before they were passed in August 2005.

The referendum was held from 11-15 February 2006. Voting began in Apia on 11 February with voting opened for Apia-based Tokelauans, particularly public servants and students. The locked ballot box was then taken by ship to each of the three atolls (Hooper, 2007:23-24). Voting was undertaken in Atafu on 13 February, Nukunonu on 14 February, and Fakaofo on 15 February. The result was announced in the evening of 15 February by the new *ulu*, Kolouei O'Brien, in his inauguration speech. The ship also carried a party of about fifty media representatives and officials and observers from New Zealand and the UN (Hooper, 2007:23-24). The television, print and radio media reporters were predominantly from New Zealand, but the event was also covered by some organisations in Britain and the United States.

The UN was invited by the New Zealand and Tokelauan governments to send a team to monitor the referendum. The UN group included a representative of the Special Committee on Decolonisation, Ambassador Robert Aisi of Papua New Guinea, one official from the Decolonisation Unit and two from the Electoral Assistance Division (UN, 2006). Ambassador Aisi announced the result of the referendum to the Special Committee on 23 February 2006, reporting also that "the entire polling process was universally praised" by UN monitors, the New Zealand Electoral Commission and the media, and "every step was very professionally conducted" (Aisi, 2006). The Ambassador concluded that "the result of this act of self-determination reflects the freely expressed wishes of the people as required under UN Resolution 1541" (Aisi, 2006).

## ***The result***

The proposal for Tokelau to become self-governing in free association with New Zealand did not pass at the February 2006 referendum. Of the votes cast, 349 (60 per cent) were in favour of the proposal and 232 (40 per cent) voted to reject it (Government of Tokelau, 2006). The referendum fell 35 votes short of the two thirds majority required for a formal change of status (MFAT, 2006c:7). Tokelau did not become the world's newest nation. In total, 584 of the 615 people who registered to vote submitted ballots during the referendum, meaning voter turnout was 95 per cent. Three ballots were deemed to be invalid according to the Referendum Rules, leaving a total of 581 valid votes (Government of Tokelau, 2006). Because all votes were placed in the same ballot box, it was not possible to determine the percentages of 'yes' and 'no' votes for each village individually.

Some analysts argue that the opposition to the proposal was actually much greater than reflected in the number of votes cast. Antony Hooper, an anthropologist who has studied and written extensively on Tokelau, calculated that if those who did not register were added to those who voted 'no', the 'real' 'no' vote would be 57 per cent, leaving only 43 per cent in favour of the proposal (Hooper, 2007:24). Hooper's argument is that people could not have simply been unaware of the need to register because the consultation, publicity and preparation activities surrounding the referendum could not go unnoticed in such small communities. Therefore, in his view, the choice not to register to vote in the referendum was a boycott, which in Tokelau culture points to disagreement with a proposal. Such a boycott is seen as a lack of *maopopo* (togetherness, unity of purpose) and understood by Tokelauans to mean 'no' (Hooper, 2007:24).

How to interpret the issue of non-registration is not clear, however. The release of the 2006 census data raises the question of whether the total population had decreased, so the percentage registered would in fact have been higher, although the census count was made several months post-referendum so this cannot be assumed. One research participant also pointed out that several people somehow missed out on registering and showed up to vote 'yes' on the polling



day but were not allowed to vote (Participant S22). Whatever the level of 'true' opposition, the reasons for not registering would have been the same as those for voting 'no' (Hooper, 2007:24).

The outcome of the referendum was a surprise to New Zealand officials and Tokelau supporters of self-government (Gregory, 2006c). Although some expected the result would be close, there was a lot of confidence and excitement surrounding the process right up until voting was actually carried out. "According to all reports the disappointment among all officials was palpable – and made all the more acute because there appeared to be no single factor that could explain the outcome" (Hooper, 2007:24).

With the media presence on the referendum voyage, there was quite extensive coverage of the event in New Zealand, particularly on public radio and in print media. Immediately after the result was announced, various factors were reported in the press as being behind the failure of the proposal to pass. These included cautiousness and fear of change (Gregory, 2006a; Gregory, 2006c; Hooper, 2007:24); divisions within villages, personality clashes and campaigning or 'scaremongering' (Gregory, 2006c; Hooper, 2007:24; RNZI, 2006); the influence of Tokelauans living overseas (Fairfax Newspapers, 2006; Dreaver, 2006); and a lack of understanding of the issues involved and the inadequacy of the information and education process (Plunket, 2006; Tait, 2006; Gregory, 2006c). The reasons given by people who admitted to voting 'no', or by New Zealand Tokelauans asked to comment, were cited as including a feeling that Tokelau was not ready to self-govern, in particular that it lacked sufficient infrastructure and skilled people to do so, and that there was a mistrust of New Zealand's assurances that financial assistance would not be cut (Chapman, 2006; Dreaver, 2006; Plunket, 2006; Gregory, 2006b). New Zealand officials also reported similar factors in the outcome, in particular caution, the "unhappy" situation in Atafu, the influence of expatriate Tokelauans, and "a campaign run against the political leadership by past and present government employees" (MFAT, 2006b:5).

The most comprehensive media article on Tokelau and the referendum was written by Ian Parker and published in the *New Yorker* magazine on 1 May 2006. Parker travelled with the media contingent to Tokelau to observe the vote in February. The sentiments expressed by his sources also reflected opinions that village divisions (Parker, 2006:71), campaigning or questioning of leaders (Parker, 2006:74), and doubt in Tokelau's ability to govern itself (Parker, 2006:72 and 74-75). In this article, Parker also argued that there was a sense of dependency and complacency among many Tokelauans that may have been a contributing factor, in that people were happy with how things were and could not imagine not relying completely on New Zealand. For example, he quoted one source as saying that "the 'no' voters think that we can sit, and New Zealand will bring us money" (Parker, 2006:71) and came to the conclusion that "Tokelauans had signed a declaration of dependence. As one resident, characterising this mindset, put it, 'Only when I'm suffering, then I really want to change. I'm not suffering'" (Parker, 2006:75).

Having read these reports prior to departing to undertake fieldwork in Tokelau, there was a broad picture already in place of the events surrounding the referendum and possible reasons for its outcome. The aim of the fieldwork was therefore to see whether Tokelauans themselves agreed that the reasons proposed in the press and official were factors in the outcome, and to investigate the reasons in more detail.

## **Tokelauan explanations for the outcome**

In the fieldwork undertaken in Tokelau in July and August 2006, a wide variety of reasons were given by Tokelauans ('participants') for the outcome of the referendum. All of the material in this section was collected during the fieldwork in July and August of 2006, with the majority sourced from the notes taken during interviews. Some information (where indicated) is also taken from documents provided by participants during the fieldwork.

Participants' responses have been grouped into three main themes: political rivalries and divisions, lack of understanding of the issues and concepts relating to self-government, and a feeling that Tokelau is not ready for self-government.

These themes were chosen because they were the common factors that could be used to amalgamate varied arguments offered by participants. The first theme includes divisions within and between villages and in the public service, which participants felt affected the outcome through people basing their decisions on personal or political factors rather than their opinions of the issues. The second theme includes perceived deficiencies in the education and information programme, and Tokelauan ways of thinking which hindered people's ability to understand the issues involved. The third theme covers arguments from participants that improvements need to be made, for example in the areas of governance, human resource capacity and economic development, before Tokelau should consider becoming self-governing. The referendum arrangements such as the two thirds majority requirement, inefficiencies in the registration process and the timing of the vote may have had some effect, and were mentioned by a few participants as possible factors, but did not seem to be a major concern and so were not included as a separate theme.

The specific examples offered under each theme in the different villages varied, but the general themes were present in participants' arguments from all three villages. As mentioned above, the vote count was an aggregate of all three villages' votes, with no separate count for each, so it is not possible to tell where the most 'no' votes were cast. The three themes from the interview data are presented below.

### ***Local rivalries and divisions***

Regardless of their general attitude towards the proposal, participants identified one or another political division or rivalry or interference as affecting people's decision on how they would vote in the referendum. These included divisions within and between villages and within the public service. The common factor that brings all of these issues together in one theme is that they all relate to decisions being made based on individuals' opinions of the people delivering the message, rather than the actual issues at hand. Several participants expressed this as 'people looking at the person not the issues' (for example Participants S6, S22).

Rivalry within each atoll was seen by participants to have led to the referendum being more about personalities and relationships instead of the issues surrounding self-government. For example, it was seen that if people did not like the *ulu* or other self-determination supporters they would vote 'no' even though they did actually understand the issues and felt that self-determination was right for Tokelau (for example Participants S7, S22). One participant raised the fact that many people who were against self-government could not explain why they voted 'no', so their decision must have been for personal reasons (Participant S11). Tokelauans in New Zealand were seen by Tokelauans in the islands as involved in these local rivalries, in which families tended to stick together and form rival blocs. 'Campaigners' were also seen by some participants to have been 'playing games' and turning self-government into a vehicle for raising underlying issues such as public service employment or divisions in the church (Participants S16, S32). One participant also suggested that such game-playing was worse in small close communities where people's judgement was easily affected, even though they were otherwise reasonable (Participant S27).

Self-government supporters tended to see any questions as 'campaigning' against self-government (for example Participants C15, S23, C36). One participant took a more neutral view, reporting that some 'stirring' was going on, but regardless of their motives, some critics did raise valid questions about the package (Participant S16). Those who admitted having spoken out during the lead up to the referendum strongly asserted that they were not campaigning but rather raising awareness of what they saw as potential downfalls of self-government, and encouraging people to look at both the advantages and disadvantages of such a move (Participants C15, C28, C36). These people felt that their questions and concerns had been interpreted by village leaders as challenges or opposition. They also denied that they had enough standing in the communities to convince very many people to vote 'no' if it had been their aim to influence them. New Zealand families were seen as attempting to explain both sides rather than promoting a 'no' vote, when they were asked for explanations by relatives in the islands who were having trouble understanding the issues (for example Participant C13).

Those involved in the work towards self-government countered that the people they considered to be campaigning should have spoken up during the development of the package if they did not agree or if they had questions (Participants S11, S37). The ‘campaigners’ were described as educated and respected Tokelauans who influenced many people (Participant A18). The draft Treaty was seen to have covered all of the objections and concerns raised, and as a good deal for Tokelau – the best New Zealand could offer (for example Participants S11, S16, S23). There was also a feeling that the ‘campaigners’ working for the public service should have raised their questions privately and directly to their colleagues, instead of in public, so that the government could present a united face (Participant S37).

### Village politics

Ongoing divisions or rivalries in all three villages were seen by participants as a factor in the failure of the proposal to pass. Opposition to the proposal was recounted as being present to a greater or less extent in all three villages (for example Participants S9, S12, S34). Participants in all three villages were certainly split when asked their opinions of what self-government would mean for Tokelau, either speaking in support of or raising concerns about the idea. The opposition was described as more overt and vocal in Fakaofu and Atafu, but was also seen in Nukunonu (Participants S12, S23, S34). In Fakaofu and Nukunonu, participants stated that those questioning the provisions in the package were either previous rivals of current leaders in elections or disgruntled public servants (for example Participant S10). In Atafu, it was suggested that the deep division resulting from ‘the Pastor situation’ would have had an effect on the outcome, with one leader there even advising people that ‘if you do not understand then you should vote ‘no’ (Participants S9, S23). Those against the Pastor were seen as more likely to have voted ‘yes’, while the Pastor and leaders’ supporters would have voted ‘no’ (for example Participants S26, C31).

Participants explained that a lot of lobbying went on prior to the referendum. In Nukunonu, resistance was also seen in some people’s silence during consultations, seeming to just be there because they had to be (Participant S12).



In Atafu, it was felt that some effects of ‘the Pastor situation’ could have included that some did not participate in consultations because of the division (Participant S12), that the situation was used by leaders to influence people towards their own preference against self-government (Participant S32, S35), and that some of the ejected *matai* were more educated and would have been able to explain the issues better, and that those left were all anti-self-government (Participant S35).

#### Divisions in the public service

Although no individuals were named, it was reported in the media and explained by participants that several of the ‘campaigners’ were current or former public service employees (for example Participants S12, S23). In addition to the local political rivalries discussed above, some dissatisfaction and personal issues within the public service were mentioned as a factor behind the ‘campaigning’. Some public servants felt that they had been kept out of the consultation and education process, that the political leaders and Apia office were appropriating the process to enhance their own prestige, and keeping things to themselves for their own benefit (for example Participants C4, C28, S37). There was also some resentment at what was seen as too much focus on self-determination at the expense of other areas (Participants C1, C29). Another participant argued that some public employees had problems such as their contracts not being renewed or their performance being questioned, so they wanted to hurt the government by lobbying against the proposal (Participant S10).

#### Overseas families

A negative influence from New Zealand Tokelauans was seen by participants as a factor in the referendum outcome. Overseas-based Tokelauans were seen by those in the islands to still have had a lot of influence in the villages (for example Participant S27). “In the final days before the referendum letters from individuals and groups from abroad were read publicly asking the homeland to reconsider the General Fono decision, and presenting arguments on why Tokelau should vote no” (Kalolo, 2006:7). Participants saw the input from Tokelauans overseas as interference and a problem, saying that the overseas

residents should have stayed out of the argument since they chose to move away (Participant S7, S22). Participants also felt that people living outside Tokelau could not fully understand the issues and make the best decision for the islands (for example Participant S11).

### Inter-atoll politics

Participants recounted that during the lead-up to the referendum it became apparent that the Council for Ongoing Government was divided, and not all its members were in support of the proposal. People could see this and were confused by it. “The Council for Ongoing Government compounded the uncertainty (arising from lack of understanding and overseas input) by its own disunity” (Kalolo, 2006:7). In mid-2005, when the Council for Ongoing Government visited all three villages and held meetings in order to “consult and enlighten the Tokelau public” about the referendum, not all Council for Ongoing Government members attended. “This did not go unnoticed, and from this point on the Council as a team did not speak with one collective voice for Tokelau” (Kalolo, 2006:7).

Participants agreed that there was a lack of unity among Tokelau’s leaders and argued that the lack of unity would have influenced some to vote ‘no’ – people in the villages began to doubt the value of self-government since their leaders could not agree on it (for example Participants S9, S27). This confusion also made people in the villages more open to the influence of ‘campaigners’ and family members overseas. Some leaders were reported to have changed their position once they returned to their village from national meetings, and did not give people the correct information about self-government or explain it properly despite this being their responsibility as Council for Ongoing Government and Referendum Commission members (for example Participants S6, S9, S11, S23). One possible motivation for the division in the Council for Ongoing Government proposed by several participants was that each council member wanted the prestige of being recorded in history as the first leader of a new nation, and therefore tried to either slow or accelerate the self-determination process according to when their term would fall (for example Participants S9, S10, C19, C36).

### Susceptibility to influence

Participants considered that all of these personal and political influences on how people voted in the referendum were related to how well individuals understood the issues involved. It was argued that the local politics would always have an influence, but that if people had understood the issues better they would not have been so susceptible to this influence (Participants S26, S27). Therefore, education was seen to be the key for people to make their own independent decision (Participant S12). Participants also felt that due to the 'campaign', the referendum's outcome did not reflect the Tokelauan people's genuine feelings, since some in the villages were convinced to see the issues through someone else's eyes, and would have voted accordingly (Participants A17, S22). For example, one participant criticised the people speaking out for manipulating people who do not know better and putting thoughts in their minds (Participant S22). In general, however, there was seen to be a need to fix the local divisions otherwise it would not matter how well people understood the package, and the result would probably be the same if a second referendum was held. Participants offered a variety of explanations for why people in the villages had difficulty understanding the proposal and self-government issues and concepts.

### ***People did not understand the proposal***

"After the February 2006 Referendum, when asked why they voted 'No', many people responded: 'Ko au he malamalama (I do not understand)' (Kalolo, 2006:4).

Participants on both sides of the self-government debate said that part of the reason for the failure of the proposal was because of a lack of understanding among 'poor' or 'regular' or 'true' Tokelauans of the proposal and the implications of either a 'yes' or a 'no' outcome (for example Participants S11, A17, A18, S27, C29). It was felt that there could have been some changes in the education programme, in both its process and content, which could have addressed this problem. Even the minority who argued that the education

programme was adequate acknowledged that there were still some people in the community who did not understand the complex issues. Other reasons suggested for why there was a lack of comprehension included ideas about a 'Tokelau mindset' of dependency and complacency, and confusion over the introduction of democratic decision-making.

#### Education and information programme

Participants raised concerns about the education and information programme that was carried out in the lead-up to the referendum. Some participants argued that there was sufficient information and opportunities for discussion provided, and that the legal team had done a good job. Therefore, there were factors other than the education programme itself, such as village politics or facets of Tokelauan culture, that affected the extent to which people in the villages understood the referendum package and self-government in general.

In relation to the education and information programme, participants raised five main concerns. The first concern was that the process was too short, which meant that it was rushed and people did not have enough time to take in all the issues and work through them to make fair, considered decisions (for example Participants C4, S9, S24). The second concern was that the programme was not continuous, with no ongoing discussions in between visits from the referendum team. This lack on continuity was a concern because participants felt that education and information needed to be sustained in Tokelau, otherwise people would not remember what they have heard, and also needed time to get used to new concepts. One participant explained that the team needed to stay longer in each village, as their departure allowed leaders to give different messages (Participant S5). The third concern was that the people implementing the education programme should have been from the villages themselves, not the Apia office, because the local officials had better local knowledge and understanding, especially of the details of local situations (Participant S27). The team from Apia was also limited by its coming and going, as mentioned above. Kalolo argues that there needed to be "a village-centred public education strategy... instead of the irregular, brief consultative visits by an Apia-based group" (Kalolo, 2006:7). Participants also argued that the village leaders should

not have been the implementers of the education and information programme, because then it would have been easier to distance the issues from the local political climate (for example Participant S35).

The fourth concern was that the execution of the programme was not satisfactory, with several participants feeling that the workshops that were held were not of a high quality (for example Participant S16). Suggested problems were that the workshop facilitators seemed to be unnerved by the questions that were raised during the workshops and often did not answer them, the facilitators assumed too much prior knowledge of workshop attendees so did not explain the details well enough, and that the message presented throughout the information programme was not consistent (for example Participants C15, S16, C21). In addition to this, some participants argued that group consultation was not the most appropriate method, as people in Tokelau are often too shy or polite to ask questions, both because speaking out is not the culture and because lawyers and other experts are respected and assumed to know best what is correct (Participants C5 & S16).

The fifth and final main concern was that the availability of information varied within and between the villages. For instance, one participant explained that within each village the people closest to public servants and leaders were more aware of the issues and understood them better than 'regular' people (Participant C5). Information availability was uneven between the atolls due to their isolation from each other, lower capacity in some village offices, and differences in opinion between Council for Ongoing Government members (for example Participant A18).

Participants also had several concerns about the content and message of the education programme. The first concern related by participants about the content of the programme was that the language used was too complicated and technical, which people who had not been exposed to the concepts before found very difficult to comprehend (for example Participants S6, S12, C28). It was seen to have been difficult, even for educated Tokelauan people, to translate the concepts because they had no basis or equivalent concepts in Tokelauan



language or culture (Participant S27). The second was that participants felt that the words and the attitudes used in delivering the information seemed like the referendum team was pushing self-government through instead of being open to listening to the doubts and worries of people in the villages (for example Participants C4, C14, C36). The process appeared to some participants to be a campaign to convince rather than educate and help people understand. The information provided seemed to participants to be propaganda, and people resented the way it was presented at public meetings (for example Participants C4, C14, C15, A18). There were reports of comments made in workshops and village meetings, such as 'if we vote 'no' then New Zealand will just decide for us', or that if Tokelau did not become self-governing then it could lose financial aid and no longer be able to pay the *aumaga* for village work (Participant C14, C21, C29). Even some participants who spoke in favour of the proposal felt that sometimes the language used in meetings supposed to educate about self-government was too strong, and that a more gentle approach was needed (Participant S7 & S12).

The third concern which several participants raised about the message and content of the education programme was that the information provided was unbalanced. Self-government was presented as the only way forward and inevitable, while both its advantages and disadvantages were not presented (for example Participants C14, C15, A18, C21). The information provided was based too much on concepts and did not explain directly how people's lives might be affected (Participant C14). This affected people's ability to understand the issues and also meant that some were sceptical and not convinced that self-government could be as advantageous for Tokelauans as was being described (Participants C14, S20, C33).

### The 'Tokelau mindset'

There are several ways Tokelauans see the world that participants described during their interviews, and they felt these world views would have affected the outcome of the referendum. These mindsets included fear of or reluctance to change due to dependency or lack of motivation and incentive, and a narrow view of the world and lack of outside exposure. This so-called 'Tokelau mindset'

comprising fear of change and a narrow perspective was also seen by participants to relate to Tokelau's readiness for self-government and as being a challenge in the education and information process.

Participants on both sides of the debate over self-government characterised the current relationship between Tokelau and New Zealand as similar to that between a mother and child, involving reliance and dependency, with 'spoon-feeding' a commonly used metaphor (for example Participants C2, S7). It was felt by participants that many Tokelauans were lazy from 'having it easy for too long' with New Zealand's support. Tokelauans were used to things being handed to them with minimal effort on their part, and an external party always being there to ask for money or advice, without having to solve problems themselves (for example Participants C2, S9, A18, S23). Other participants argued that many Tokelauans were happy with the current dependence on New Zealand, and did not see it as bad or needing to change (for example Participants A18, C19). An example of this was one participant who said that Tokelau's leaders were uncomfortable with being a colony but other people in the villages just saw this as their way of life (Participant C4).

The second feature of the 'Tokelau mindset' that participants felt might have hindered the passage of the proposal was a narrow view of the world, especially amongst people who have lived in the islands for their whole lives. Tokelau's isolation was seen by participants to be a factor behind this narrow perspective, as many people in the islands did not know what was going on in the rest of the world (for example Participant C14). Participants said that for many Tokelauan people, their current way of life and relationship with New Zealand was all they knew, which they had nothing to compare to, and therefore they valued and wanted to hold onto (for example Participants S7, C33). This means that Tokelauan people usually take a lot of convincing over long periods to change their customs and ideas, which contributed to feelings of being rushed through the education process (Participant S20).

Participants also saw the sense of dependency and narrow world view as leading to a lack of ambition and determination – many Tokelauans were thankful for

what they had and did not ask for more (for example Participant C14). It was also argued by one participant that Tokelauans did not plan for the future or save, because everything had always come from their government or from New Zealand, and so they tended to wait until a problem occurs before acting (Participant C3).

Participants pointed out that, while many of the concerns with the education and information programme and Tokelauan culture which led to a lack of understanding of the self-government proposal and had an effect on the referendum outcome. This lack of understanding was not universal in the islands. Some Tokelauans understood the package, but did not agree with it and questioned Tokelau's readiness to become self-governing.

### ***Tokelau is not ready***

A perception that Tokelau was not ready to self-govern was common among participants who were critical of the referendum proposal and package. Several participants, some of whom admitted voting 'no' or said they voted 'yes' but were glad the outcome was 'no', explained that they felt the time was not right for Tokelau to become self-governing. Others did not volunteer whether they had voted 'yes' or 'no' but raised the same issues. The areas which people felt needed to be improved before Tokelau would be ready for self-government included economic development, public sector governance and capacity, and infrastructure and services. These concerns were also reported by participants to have been among the questions raised by the 'campaigners' in the build-up to the referendum.

Participants who were critical of the proposal thought that self-government was a good idea for the future but that Tokelau was not ready for it yet (for example Participants C14, C19, C36). They felt that there was a need for improvements before holding another self-determination referendum, because if Tokelau did not address these issues first then self-government would not be a success. They preferred that Tokelau stayed with New Zealand until these issues were resolved. Some felt that the 2006 referendum was premature due to Tokelau being pressured by the UN or New Zealand to self-determine. One opinion

expressed in some interviews (for example Participant C1), and also in casual conversations in the villages, was that New Zealand was not fulfilling its obligations to Tokelau. If Tokelau was truly part of New Zealand, as it was legally under the 1948 Act, the standards of health and education in particular should be comparable to those in rural areas of New Zealand.

On the other side of the debate, proponents of self-government strongly disagreed with this sentiment, arguing instead that Tokelau was not making enough effort to make improvements in these areas, and did not appreciate and make the most of all the support they were given by New Zealand (for example Participant S10). Supporters of self-government agreed that Tokelau's needs were not being met under the current arrangement, but that the way to address this was not to ask New Zealand for more, instead Tokelau needed to try a new way, standing alone and working hard for their own benefit. Moving to self-government would be a catalyst to get everything else started (for example Participant S6, S9). Some participants argued that there was actually nothing new to be ready for, because Tokelau was already self-governing quite successfully, and the change would only be in their formal status (Participants S11, S16). This meant that there was enough in place in terms of public sector structures and processes to start self-government, and once Tokelau became self-governing there would be a need to keep building capacity. Capacity building needs were not a barrier to self-government and would always be a concern no matter how long a country had been running its own government.

The following subsections detail the issues and concerns raised by participants in the areas of economic development, public sector governance and capacity, and other areas such as infrastructure and services. Many of these concerns were also raised by people speaking in support of self-government, who argued that they were actually reasons to go ahead with self-government in order to address the problems, rather than reasons to reject it. For example, opponents felt Tokelau cannot self-govern successfully without economic development so measures should be put in place first (for example Participant C28), but supporters argued Tokelau cannot achieve economic development until it is self-governing and therefore forced into self-reliance and being able to receive

support from new sources (for example Participant S11). Another example was in relation to governance concerns such as transparency and accountability, with opponents seeing these as a threat to the success of self-government, while supporters felt the problems could only be addressed once Tokelau became self-governing.

### Economic development

Economic development was generally referred to by participants in terms of generating income and decreasing Tokelau's reliance on outside assistance. Participants explained that there was a concern in the villages as to how Tokelau would support itself under self-government, and that for 'regular' people the most important issue relating to self-government was money and where it would come from (for example Participants C14, C25). For instance, it was argued that there was a fear among some villagers that New Zealand would withdraw some or all of its financial support once Tokelau was self-governing, despite the guarantee of ongoing support included in the draft Treaty (for example Participants S7, A17). The feeling among self-government critics was that Tokelau would not have the power or influence to be able to hold New Zealand to the Treaty (for example Participants C15, C33).

A major advantage of self-government promoted by the education and information team in the programme leading up to the referendum was that if the proposal passed, Tokelau would then be eligible to receive aid from new sources, both bilateral and multilateral organisations, which it cannot currently access due to its status as a territory. However, participants argued that this new assistance was not guaranteed, and expressed doubt that other countries would provide aid to Tokelau. This was because participants seemed to understand aid as a two-way relationship, and argued that Tokelau had nothing to offer in return for aid funds (for example Participants C2, C29). Another concern was that the *taupulega* and public service are not experienced in negotiating with other governments in order to get the best deal for Tokelau (Participant C31).



Participants argued that Tokelau was currently doing nothing to generate its own income, due to a lack of capacity and specialists, information on resource potential, and leadership (for example Participants S9, C28). Just getting access to more funding was not enough to improve the situation, there was a need for expertise to come with it, for outside people to come and show Tokelauans how to implement projects rather than just sending reports (Participant C14, C25). Some also felt that economic development ideas such as market gardening, commercial fishing and handicrafts were not being encouraged because the *taupulega* often saw such initiatives as for individual profit and therefore against custom (for example Participants C2, C21). Another factor in this was that the *taupulega* did not undertake such initiatives as a community enterprise, because they prioritised the utilisation of labour for village work over income-generating activities (Participant C21).

#### Governance processes and structures

Concerns about governance were raised both by public servants and 'ordinary' Tokelauan people. For example, participants saw a need to develop transparent policy and decision making structures and processes (for example Participants C13, C19, C21). Some argued that village and national leaders never explained their decisions and policies, so people were unclear as to what those decisions were based on (Participant C13). It was felt that leaders often took care of their own families first (Participant C21) and that in such a small place many people took on multiple roles and were often thrust into new ones, so their roles became confused and conflicts of interest were difficult to avoid (Participant S16).

The advice provided to the *taupulega* by the village and national offices was felt by participants to be of low standard. Participants saw a need for training of staff, especially in policy advice processes, because many had come from practical backgrounds, such as nursing or teaching, and were now expected to think strategically and provide high-level advice (Participants S9, C19). A lack of willingness among elders to ask for or accept advice from younger advisors, and to understand and critically evaluate the advice they receive, were also seen as areas to be worked on. There was also a feeling that Tokelau's leaders and

public servants were out of touch with what people really wanted, so they could not represent them well (Participants C21, C28). It was argued that the elders only shared their own views in meetings. They did not discuss issues with their families to get their input, and therefore they were only on the councils as individuals and not as representatives (Participant C13). Some participants also mentioned that the General Fono delegates did not take issues back to their communities for discussion.

In terms of the role of culture in decision making, it was argued that Tokelau culture was a good basis for decisions relating to natural resources such as coconuts and fish, but now that money was involved there was a need for new decision-making processes (for example Participant S26). One participant explained that the problem was that Tokelauans tended to see money as just another 'natural' resource coming from somewhere 'in the sky' (Participant S10). Tokelauans were seen to need to understand where money came from and how to use it properly, for example savings, investment and other business concepts (Participants S7, S10). There was a strong feeling among participants that some things in culture should be stable, for example the tradition of sharing was seen as the most important part of Tokelau culture (Participants S24, C25). However, some customs needed to change to address new issues and accommodate new ways. There was a view that a change of attitudes was needed and lessons should be learned from outside Tokelau, but that the current village-based governance structure should not be changed as this would hurt Tokelauan culture (for example Participant C13).

The referendum was one example of how traditional and new ways of making decisions can clash, and some participants felt that this clash was a factor in the referendum's outcome. The referendum was a new experience for Tokelau, as they had only previously voted on people in elections to village positions, not issues such as self-government (Participant C29). Issues had always been decided before by the village elders, and their authority was never questioned. Participants felt that due to this newness, there was a lack of understanding of democracy and that this was demonstrated by reports that people were 'taken against' for voting 'no', and individuals were blamed for the outcome (for

example Participants C2, C15, S20, C29). It was argued that there was a need for general political awareness and education on specific issues to be voted on such as self-government (Participants C14, S20). A few participants said that the opinions of the leaders of each atoll indicated which way each village would vote, since people, especially those without outside exposure, looked to the leaders for guidance on how to vote if they did not understand issues (Participants S34, S35).

Several concerns were also raised about public sector operations and the implementation of policies in Tokelau. Participants who questioned Tokelau's readiness to self-govern were concerned that there was a lack of sound management processes such as human resources and financial management, and a need to adhere more closely to the ones that already existed (for example Participants C13, S20, C21). Several examples of financial mismanagement were offered by participants. One participant argued that their village's budget was overspent almost every year (Participant 25), and another said that money in their village was being diverted to building a new church, which was not its intended purpose (Participant S30), while another saw a need for proper accounting to uncover corruption and mismanagement (Participant S10).

The devolution of the public service to village control was seen by some as not fully successful. The devolution led to competition for resources between the three villages, with each village vying for resources they did not really require, but the others villages had, and also refusing to share funding and staff as occurred previously under the national public service structure (for example Participant C5). The perception was that public servants were still working towards understanding their jobs and roles within Tokelau's governance structure after the devolution (Participant S26). Accountability lines were seen as particularly unclear, for example whether a public servant was primarily responsible to their department's national director or to village elders (Participant S34). In addition to this, because the culture on each atoll was seen as unique and because they were so isolated from each other, it was an ongoing challenge to form a national identity and work together (Participant S26).

### Human resource capacity

Participants were concerned that Tokelau did not have the capacity, especially in terms of skilled people, to run its government effectively. There were concerns in relation to both the decision makers (elders) and advisors or implementers (public servants).

Participants felt that most *taupulega* members did not have sufficient formal education, and no training or experience in handling large sums of money (for example Participants C5, S20, C21). If *taupulega* members were educated, they tended to be younger, and therefore did not or could not speak up in meetings. It was hard for younger *taupulega* members to make suggestions without seeming disrespectful to their elders, and as a result they generally just followed the decisions of their elders (Participant C13). *Taupulega* members also did not usually have enough exposure to the outside, with most having only been as far as Samoa. This meant that they only knew one way of doing things, had nothing to compare this way to, and were suspicious of new ways and ideas coming from the outside (Participants C13, S26). Many current issues were totally foreign to *taupulega* members, so they relied on the advice of public servants in making their decisions (Participants S9, C19). Several participants argued that the *taupulega* were limited in their ability to make good decisions for their villages and Tokelau, and argued that there needed to be training and better support provided to help the elders understand needs, make better decisions and plan for the future (for example Participants s26, C21, S34).

Participants also felt that the skills of the advisors and implementers in the villages and nation were inadequate for self-government to be successful. Some said that Tokelau did not have enough or not good enough human resources. This opinion was illustrated with the point that non-Tokelauans currently held key positions in the public service, and there was a reliance on Volunteer Services Abroad (VSA) volunteers to make up teacher numbers. There was also a need to attract young Tokelauans back to the islands. Some participants argued that in order to attract these people, it was important to not make them feel like outsiders, and that they had to be given proper jobs that actually utilise

their skills. Otherwise many would, and did, turn around and leave again (Participant S20).

Another concern was that the attitude to paid work in Tokelau was too casual, with the time spent at work too little and efficiency lacking (Participants S20, C21). One participant complained there was no customer service focus in the village offices, with staff not being available to assist people or not being able to answer queries adequately, leading to a feeling of getting 'run around' (Participant C21). Another participant argued that public service staff currently lacked the skills and motivation to be effective and could not handle their workloads, leading to doubt that they could cope if the expectations and requirements of them were increased with the assumption of self-government (Participant S20).

#### Other areas for improvement

Several other areas were seen by participants as needing to be improved, fixed or put in place before Tokelau could self-govern successfully. Some participants focused on infrastructure and services that were required, or that needed upgrading, including the seawalls, school buildings, hospital buildings and equipment, and transport (new boat, airstrip, wharves) (for example Participants C3, C29). Other participants were most concerned with the legal system being able to cope with new problems, such as drugs, for which village laws and customs were seen as not providing sufficient deterrence or punishment (Participant C4). Another concern was a need for Tokelau to be ready to protect itself before opening up to the rest of the world, for example in the areas of tourism, drugs, immigration and customs, western influences, and the EEZ (Participants C13, A18).

Another doubt relating to Tokelau's readiness for self-government was that Tokelau did not have a capital and its main office was in another country (Samoa), and questions were raised over its credibility as a nation with this arrangement still in place (for example Participants C4, C25). Having the office in Apia was seen as affecting efficiency in public service delivery, since it was challenging for public servants from Apia who were seen in the villages as



outsiders and had to deal with travel and communication barriers (Participants S27, S37).

Several constitutional issues were also raised, including that the General Fono composition should be equal across all three atolls, otherwise there was a power imbalance between them (Participant S16). The one-year term for the position of *ulu* was too short for them to be effective, as it took longer than that to fully implement decisions, and meant that policies and priorities changed every year with each leader's own agenda (Participants C14, S26). A few participants felt that the *taupulega* should be elected in order to get the best people in the job, which does not necessarily mean the oldest (for example Participant S26).

## **Chapter summary**

The self-determination referendum was held in Tokelau's villages (and Apia) in February 2006. The self-government package had been developed during the decolonisation process outlined in Chapter One, and was approved by the General Fono in August 2005. The package comprised the Constitution of Tokelau and the draft Treaty of Free Association. The proposal, which voters were asked to either accept or reject, was that Tokelau become self-governing on the basis of provisions in the package. A programme of workshops aimed at providing education and information on the package was undertaken following the August 2005 agreement to the package by the General Fono, and the setting of the referendum procedures.

In the February 2006 referendum, 40 per cent of Tokelauans elected to vote 'no' and reject the proposal. The proposal was therefore unsuccessful, because the threshold, set by Tokelau's government, of 66 per cent of votes being in its favour was not reached. Participants in the fieldwork interviews in Tokelau identified a variety of factors that they felt had affected the referendum's outcome. These explanations fell into three overarching themes – local rivalries and divisions, lack of understanding of the issues, and misgivings over Tokelau's readiness for self-government.

People in all three villages, some of them public servants, spoke out during the build up to the referendum, questioning the provisions of the package. Participants considered that such questioning was interpreted by village leaders and self-government promoters as 'campaigning' against both the referendum and against the leaders. The division in Atafu was seen as an extreme case of the effect of local political rivalries on the referendum outcome, with those against the Pastor more likely to have voted 'yes'. Input from family members in New Zealand also contributed to the rivalries and questioning. People were therefore seen to have voted based on personal or political differences rather than on their opinion of the proposal.

A lack of understanding of the self-government package among 'regular' Tokelauans was seen by participants to have left some people more susceptible to the influences arising out of the local divisions and rivalries. The low level of comprehension was attributed to deficiencies in the education and information programme prior to the referendum, such as that the programme was too short and that the information presented was unbalanced and seen as propaganda, and to a 'Tokelau mindset' of dependency and fear of change.

Critics of the proposal argued that Tokelau was not ready for self-determination. These participants believed that Tokelau did not currently have the capacity to self-govern successfully. Concerns about Tokelau's readiness for self-government raised by participants often related to the low levels in Tokelau of economic development, human resource capacities in the public sector, and governance systems such as financial management. Other areas that participants felt needed to be improved before Tokelau could become self-governing included Tokelau's infrastructure, public services, and legal system.

The following chapter utilises the thinking on decolonisation and governance outlined in Chapter Two to further examine the three themes of local rivalries and divisions, lack of understanding and doubt over Tokelau's readiness to self-govern, and their effects on the outcome of Tokelau's self-determination referendum.

## Chapter Five: Decolonisation and Governance in Tokelau

The decolonisation process in Tokelau has been under way for over thirty years, starting with the first request for consideration of a change in status in 1962, and continuing with the foundation of the Tokelau Public Service (TPS) in 1976. The establishment of the TPS was the first concrete move by New Zealand to give Tokelau more control over its own affairs and to develop local governance structures and capacities with an eye to eventual decolonisation. The decolonisation process accelerated from the late 1990s after Tokelau declared in 1994 that it was willing to consider a future change in its political status. The 2006 referendum was supposed to have resulted in Tokelau's emergence as the world's newest nation. However, with the self-government proposal failing to pass, the process of decolonisation is still ongoing.

The change of status to self-government passed at the first attempt in both the Cook Islands and Niue in the 1960s and 1970s. Tokelau's experience of colonial rule was much less direct than in the two former territories, which has allowed local traditions to survive and evolve on their own. The decolonisation process in Tokelau has been both longer and more locally-driven, and therefore would have been expected to be as, or more, successful at establishing self-government than the processes undertaken in the Cook Islands and Niue.

The formal decolonisation process in Tokelau can therefore be seen to have been of a higher quality than those in the Cook Islands and Niue. Further reasons for the self-government proposal's failure to pass apart from the decolonisation process must be examined. These reasons can be found in the explanations given by Tokelauan participants in this study, and in particular themes on local rivalries and local people's comprehension of issues, which themselves are examples of or relate to governance issues commonly found in the Pacific.

This chapter first compares the decolonisation experiences of Tokelau, the Cook Islands and Niue, and the effectiveness of the process in preparing Tokelau for

self-government is evaluated. Reasons for the referendum outcome apart from the formal decolonisation process are then examined, starting with how local divisions and rivalries became a factor in the referendum outcome, as raised in the fieldwork interviews. The mechanisms by which local people's understanding of the self-government proposal affected the referendum outcome are then discussed. Finally, the reasons that many participants felt that Tokelau was not ready to self-govern are examined and related to governance issues from the literature.

## **The timing of decolonisation in New Zealand territories**

As the most recent example of decolonisation in the world today, there was the opportunity in Tokelau for some of the lessons learned in previous processes to be applied. This has meant that the process in Tokelau has been more locally-driven and oriented, and has resulted in more locally appropriate governance systems being put in place rather than straight introduction of outside systems as occurred in the rest of the Pacific.

### ***Periods of implementation***

As outlined in Chapter Two in the section on New Zealand and decolonisation, the decolonisation process in Tokelau, the Cook Islands and Niue began in 1962. At that time, New Zealand presented its three remaining island territories with the options for their future status of integration, independence, free association and formation of a Pacific federation (Townend, 2003:21; Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:318). The government of the Cook Islands chose the status of self-government in free association with New Zealand in 1965, after a general election contested on the basis of the issue in which self-government supporters were elected overwhelmingly (Townend, 2003:30). Although the decolonisation process in Niue began at the same time as that in the Cook Islands, Niue's leaders requested more time for preparation to become self-governing. In Niue the process of constitutional development and practical experience of national government culminated in a self-determination referendum in 1974. Niueans voted in favour of self-government in free association as the atoll's new political status (Chapman, 1976:4).

In Chapter One, it was explained that in 1962 Tokelauan leaders investigated the option of integration or federation with other Pacific Island territories with visits to Samoa and the Cook Islands. At that time, they opted not to choose any of the suggestions for a change of status, and instead retained the status quo as a territory of New Zealand (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:318). It was not until 1994 that Tokelau's leaders indicated they were ready to initiate consideration of a change in their status. In the late 1990s, constitutional and governance development accelerated in Tokelau until by 2005 the territory had a constitution drafted and was effectively self-governing. Prior to 1994, there had been initiatives to give Tokelau more control over its own affairs, including setting up and localising the TPS, and the General Fono was given limited legislative powers.

Tokelau has therefore had much more time than the Cook Islands and Niue to prepare for self-government. The process in the Cook Islands took only three years and in Niue 13 years, while in Tokelau up to the referendum the process had taken more than four decades. Part of the reason for this extended time frame was that early in Tokelau's decolonisation process, New Zealand did not focus on Tokelau's status. The delay before further attention was paid to the decolonisation of Tokelau was both because Tokelau's leaders had refused to consider a change in status, and because New Zealand's priorities at the time were the decolonisation processes in the Cook Islands and Niue (Giese & Perez, 1983:139).

Despite the delay in continuing formal decolonisation initiatives in Tokelau after the 1962 consideration of status, Tokelau still had much longer than Niue and the Cook Islands to develop, to implement, to get accustomed to and to refine their governance structures and systems. All of the developments in governance structures in Tokelau since the 1976 introduction of the TPS are relevant to decolonisation. Developments such as the full localisation of the TPS and granting of limited legislative powers and budgetary responsibility to the General Fono gave Tokelau the chance to experience nationalised government, and decide that the introduced model was not compatible with the traditional Tokelauan village-centred authority structure. To address this



incompatibility, in the late 1990s Tokelau developed a village-based governance model under the Modern House of Tokelau project detailed in Chapter One.

From the information provided in Chapter One on Tokelau's decolonisation process, it can be seen that, although the new village-based governance structure only came into full fruition with the 2004 devolution of the TPS to the control of the village councils, Tokelau had already controlled its policy and financial decisions fully since the 1994 delegation of the Administrator's powers to the General Fono (MFAT, 2003:5). The Modern House project was therefore a restructuring of the delegation to give control to the villages rather than the national body. The *toeaina* may have had less time to adapt to their new responsibilities under the structure, but since the village leaders are also General Fono delegates, they already had at least 12 years experience of modern governance systems by the time of the referendum.

### ***Decolonisation in the twenty-first century***

More than a quarter of a century has elapsed since the last successful decolonisation of a South Pacific territory, when Vanuatu gained independence in 1980 (Crocombe, 2003:425). As noted in Chapter Two, Tokelau is the only dependent territory on the UN's list currently in the process of decolonisation. The interval since the last South Pacific decolonisation has meant that the process in Tokelau has benefited from changes in dominant global approaches. As noted in the (Chapter Two) section on governance, there is now more international attention paid to participation, cultural appropriate structures, and good governance. The timing of decolonisation processes in Tokelau also meant that lessons learned from previous decolonisation experiences could be taken into account.

Changes in contemporary attitudes and practices have allowed Tokelau to have more control of and input into its decolonisation process. In Tokelau's decolonisation process, as described in Chapter One, all of the constitutional development, governance and capacity building, and education and information processes were led by Tokelau's leaders and implemented by Tokelauan staff from the Apia office. Intensive consultation has been undertaken with people in

Tokelau's villages to ensure that everyone, not only members of the national body, had the opportunity to have input into the decisions made. In addition, at the time the Cook Islands and Niue were decolonised a treaty of free association was not an option. This was because it was not certain at the time that the new status of free association would be accepted by the UN, and therefore whether the new nations would have full treaty-making capacity. The treaty is seen as providing more security to Tokelau in New Zealand's commitments. The enactment of the constitution by Tokelau rather than by the New Zealand government would have provided further evidence and recognition of their new status as a fully self-governing nation.

The timing of the acceleration in the decolonisation process in Tokelau also meant that, as noted in the governance section of Chapter Two, there has now been recognition that introduced systems of government may not be appropriate in the South Pacific (Henderson, 2002; Larmour, 1998). As described in Chapter Two, most South Pacific countries adopted Westminster-style constitutions (Larmour, 2001:1). Such constitutional systems entail the selection of government ministers from within the national legislature, adversarial political parties, and separation of the powers of the executive, legislature and judiciary (Larmour, 2001:2). Niue and the Cooks Islands both adopted modified Westminster constitutional systems. In those former territories, members of parliament are elected to represent geographical areas, and there is allowance for political parties to be established, although multi-party systems have not strongly emerged. As explained in Chapter Two, single-party systems can be a problem as there is no opposition party to maintain vigilance over the government's behaviour as is its role under Westminster arrangements (Henderson, 2002:6).

A priority of the decolonisation process in Tokelau, as outlined in Chapter One, was the development and implementation of a governance structure based on Tokelauan culture and preferences, in particular for the village councils to be the main location of power. The new structure, also illustrated in Chapter One, is that the *taupulega* are empowered to make all the decisions of government in Tokelau, but delegate issues of national importance such as foreign affairs and

management of their EEZ back 'up' to the national body (MFAT, 2005a). The executive (Council for Ongoing Government), while members of the legislature, are appointed based on their capacity as village leaders, not on their positions as elected national representatives as is the case in Westminster systems. There are also no political parties in Tokelau, so General Fono proceedings are largely non-adversarial, and consensus decision making is more easily accommodated than in Westminster-style parliaments. Although more appropriate to the local context and thereby mitigating some common governance concerns, governance challenges are still present within Tokelau's structure of government. Many of these challenges were described by participants in the fieldwork interviews.

### **Political divisions and governance challenges in Tokelau**

Apart from discussion about the cultural inappropriateness of governance structures introduced during periods of colonial rule and through decolonisation processes, governance issues arising from local political and cultural contexts are not fully considered in the literature on decolonisation. Many of the same governance challenges can be seen in Tokelau as in the rest of the developing world and the Pacific, for example the legacies of colonial rule and presence of neopatrimonial relationships. The legacies of colonial rule for governance in Tokelau are discussed below, followed by illustration of the presence of neopatrimonialism in Tokelau, in the form of the local divisions and rivalries described by participants as having an effect on the referendum outcome.

#### ***Colonial legacies***

Legacies of colonial rule such as artificially constructed borders, new political systems, destruction of indigenous governance systems, and large bureaucracies were shown in Chapter Two to have created governance challenges in developing countries. Such challenges include lack of national cohesion and lack of leadership capacity in post-decolonisation states (Betts, 2004; Fieldhouse, 1981; Potter, 2000). While the colonial presence in Tokelau has been largely unobtrusive (Giese & Perez, 1983:139-40), colonial rule has introduced some changes to the islands that affect governance today. The most influential of these changes was the introduction of the TPS in 1976, bringing

with it a cash economy and bureaucratic structures. But in general Tokelauans have been left to their own devices and the *toeaina* control the everyday running of their villages. This is seen in Tokelau as having both benefits and disadvantages for the territory. The 'hands-off' approach is seen to have been positive in that it has allowed the islands to retain the authority of their traditional leaders, but some Tokelauans now consider that New Zealand has not done enough to develop Tokelau. During the fieldwork, some people in the villages, and participants such as Participant C1, argued that if Tokelauans were New Zealand citizens, then they had the right to the same standards of education and health care service as people living in New Zealand, but these were not currently provided in Tokelau.

As in the rest of the Pacific and many other developing countries, a new layer of government was introduced to Tokelau with the formation of the General Fono (Crocombe, 2001:546; Fieldhouse, 1981:25). The section on governance in Chapter Two described how these new national governments have not always been appropriate to local contexts and therefore do not operate effectively. However, in Tokelau there has been more care taken in the design of the governance system to try and ensure that it interacts more effectively with traditional systems. This was achieved through the shift of the delegation of authority to now be from the *taupulega* 'up' to the General Fono, in order to bring the focus back to the villages. Again similar to the rest of the South Pacific as illustrated in Chapter Two, consensus decision making is valued in Tokelau, which is reflected in the operation of the General Fono and *taupulega* meetings where voting is only used on issues where a consensus has not been reached. This integration of the customary preference for consensus decision-making into formal structures is another way in which the Tokelau governance model is different from the Westminster models introduced elsewhere in the South Pacific.

One reason that introduced governance systems and concepts do not operate 'correctly' in Tokelau, despite the more culturally appropriate structure and operation of its government, is the effect of the local divisions and rivalries. These divisions and rivalries were described by participants in the fieldwork

interviews, and can be seen as examples of obstacles to ‘good’ governance in Tokelau.

### ***Local politics in Tokelau***

The local political divisions and rivalries identified by participants are examples of some of the governance challenges in developing countries in general and the South Pacific in particular, as has been described in Chapter Two.

The divisions and rivalries between and within Tokelau’s three villages are examples of what governance literature refers to as localism, which in turn is an example of neopatrimonialism. As defined in Chapter Two, neopatrimonialism means that formal democratic processes and public decision making end up being dictated not by set procedures but by personal relationships, and therefore do not make decisions in the best interest of the public (Hulme & Turner, 1997; Potter, 2000). Also described in Chapter Two, localism is the influence of local communities or events within them on the election and decisions of public officials (Larmour, 1998). Tokelau’s local divisions and rivalries have strong effects on people’s behaviour in democratic processes in general, such as the election of each village’s *faipule* and *pulenuku*.

Another example of behaviour affected by the divisions and rivalries was people’s decision on whether to vote ‘yes’ or ‘no’ in the referendum, or to not register at all. Pre-existing divisions in all three atolls were reflected in the lines drawn between supporters and opponents of self-government. It was explained by participants in all three villages, as summarised in Chapter Four, that opponents of the current leaders in previous village elections, or people on the opposing side of a current division, were the same people who publicly expressed concerns about self-government in the lead up to the referendum (for example Participants S9, S12, S34). The effect of the divisions and rivalries on voting behaviour was most visible in Atafu. In Chapter Four it was noted that those people who were refusing to attend church were more likely to vote ‘yes’ in the referendum, while those who followed the village leaders in supporting the Pastor also followed them to vote ‘no’ (Participants S26, C31). This meant that



many of the decisions on how to vote in Atafu were not based on the proposal itself but on other factors.

As well as affecting voter behaviour in the referendum, divisions between and within villages also appear to have affected the behaviour of elected leaders in the build up to the Tokelau referendum. An example is the reports from participants (for example Participants S6, S9, S11, S23), as presented in Chapter Four, that some leaders did not explain self-government and the referendum adequately to their village. The arrangements made prior to the referendum, which were presented in the first section of Chapter Four, meant that the leaders were officially required to provide such explanation in their capacity as members of the Referendum Commission. Participants offered some examples of what they saw as the leaders' reasons for choosing not to provide full explanation of the package. For instance, as was related in Chapter Four, participants explained that some leaders wanted to delay Tokelau's change in status. Participants saw this delay as motivated by a desire by those leaders to 'go down in history' as the first head of a new nation (for example Participants S9, S10, C19, C39). The lack of explanation of the package by some leaders meant that some people did not have a good understanding of the self-government proposal and its underlying concepts. Those people who did not fully understand the package were more likely to vote 'no', because they preferred to retain the status quo rather, than move to a new situation which they did not fully understand.

As seen in the (Chapter Two) section on governance in the South Pacific, the very strong family and village obligations of people living in the South Pacific can affect democratic processes and public decision making, and lead to poor governance (Crocombe, 2001:546). Tokelau is no exception. The effects on the behaviour of Tokelau's leaders and voters arising from Tokelau's internal divisions and rivalries were part of why the decolonisation process unfolded differently in Tokelau than was expected from previous experiences in the Cook Islands and Niue. Rivalries within Tokelau's villages often reflect rivalries between families. At a national level, the priority is for loyalty to one's village over national unity. These family and village pressures affected the attitude of

some Tokelauan leaders and officials adopted towards the self-government proposal, and how they acted on that attitude. While it cannot be assumed that some people in Tokelau were critical of the proposal only because they or someone in their family were rivals of political leaders, the rivalries and divisions would have provided the motivation for them to speak out against self-government, and to raise their concerns publicly rather than privately. The public airing of concerns about the self-government package in Tokelau's village prior to the referendum contributed to people's lack of understanding of what was being proposed for Tokelau's future. Local divisions and rivalries in Tokelau, the so-called 'Tokelau mindset', deficiencies in the education and information programme, and the human resources capacity of the public service also led to a relatively low level of understanding of the self-government package among villagers.

### **Explaining the lack of comprehension**

It was clear in the fieldwork data presented in Chapter Three that participants saw a lack of understanding amongst 'regular' Tokelauans of the self-government package, and what it would mean for Tokelau, as a factor in the referendum outcome (for example explained by Participants S11, A17, C29). As also seen in Chapter Four, when Tokelauan people were asked post-referendum why they voted 'no', many responded that they voted against the proposal because they did not understand it (Kalolo, 2006:4).

On its own, this low level of comprehension did not determine the referendum's outcome. Rather, it was the interaction of the lack of understanding with Tokelau's internal rivalries, and with the existence of doubts as to Tokelau's preparedness for self-government, that meant that the effects of those two factors were strengthened. Thus villagers' lack of understanding of the package was a very important contributing factor in the referendum outcome. As argued by participants (for example Participants S26, S27) and presented in Chapter Four, those people who did not understand the package fully were more susceptible to the influence of the 'campaigners' or questioners, and therefore became confused and nervous about what self-government would mean for Tokelau. People on either side of the debate on whether or not Tokelau is ready

to self-govern do not appear to have explained the issues fully or in a balanced way. Features of Tokelau's governance structures and processes that were raised by participants as limiting Tokelau's readiness to self-govern also contributed to the perceived deficiencies in the education and information programme.

People in all countries often do not completely understand what they are voting for in referendum situations, regardless of seemingly beneficial measures being taken to ensure that people comprehend issues as fully as possible. Issues are often complex and technical, and in larger populations educating everyone fully is difficult. In Tokelau, the attempts to ensure the highest level of comprehension possible were hampered by the divisions and rivalries within and between villages. It was related in Chapter Four that participants said that the position within a village's political rivalries or divisions of whoever was implementing the education and information programme led local people to question the motives of those implementers. In some cases, any information given during the education programme was seen in a negative light as 'propaganda' or forcing self-government through (for example Participants C4, C14, C19). A few participants also argued that people claiming to not understand were in fact only using their lack of understanding as an excuse so as not to admit that their actual reason for voting 'no' was in fact the influence of the divisions and which side their loyalties were with (for example Participant S32). It can be concluded that some of the lack of understanding of the self-government package among Tokelauans should be attributed to the politicising of the education and information programme.

As depicted by participants, and outlined in Chapter Four in the section of fieldwork data relating to the lack of understanding, the 'Tokelau mindset' is seen as one of dependency and fear of change (for example by Participants C2, S7, C14, S20). This mindset meant that helping people to understand the issues was even more of a challenge than in other countries. Dependency and fear of change also meant that people were more likely to be alarmed and deterred by the concerns raised by those questioning Tokelau's readiness for self-government. This was especially the case if the questions during workshops and

meetings were not considered to have been answered adequately by education programme facilitators. For people already struggling with issues foreign to their culture and world view, it must have also been confusing when facilitators aimed to convince people of the benefits of shifting to self-government while at the same time reassuring them that an alteration in Tokelau's status would not lead to any major changes to their lives. This was particularly difficult to convey because the main argument against voting 'no' was also that the status quo would remain.

In addition to the challenges posed by political interference and the 'Tokelauan mindset', the implementation of the education and information programme itself also had several perceived deficiencies. These deficiencies, as seen by participants, were outlined in Chapter Four. Participants' main concern with the programme implementation was that its duration was too short, and it seemed rushed. This short time frame did not allow people time to process the information they had been presented with and come up with questions (for example Participants C4, S9, S24). The programme was not sustained, but rather an intermittent process, with visits from advisors based in the Apia office to each village in turn (Participants S5, S27). People also argued that the leaders should not have been involved in educating as the programme became politicised and allowed the local divisions and rivalries to have a greater effect (for example Participant S35).

Issues raised about Tokelau's readiness to self-govern, as presented in Chapter Four, also appear to have affected the success of the education and information programme. These concerns relate to governance and capacity issues, many of which are seen in other developing countries, including those in the South Pacific. For example, low human resource capacity in the public sector in Tokelau was identified as limiting the effectiveness of the programme's implementation (for example by Participants S9, C19, C20). Challenges faced in helping people to understand the self-government package were not fully anticipated or addressed during the programme's implementation. The small number of public service staff with in depth knowledge of the proposal and package meant that the time of those 'experts' was spread thin. The 'experts'

could not dedicate themselves to one village for the whole programme in order to provide more sustained and consistent information. In addition, as seen in Chapter Four, in the section on divisions within Tokelau's public service, several public servants were resentful of what they perceived as their lack of involvement in the programme. These resentful public servants were described by participants as having actively opposed the package as a consequence, whereas they were likely to have supported it had they felt more ownership of the process that led up to the referendum (Participants C4, C28, C37). Barriers to good governance within Tokelau's public sector thus contributed to the lack of understanding of the package by 'regular' Tokelauans. Reasons for opposing the proposal or questioning the provisions in the package, given by these public servants and others, were generally expressed in terms of doubts about whether Tokelau's is currently capable of governing itself.

### **Reservations about readiness for self-government**

Despite Tokelau's formal decolonisation process being as good as if not better than those undertaken in the Cook Islands and Niue, local opinions of Tokelau's current capacity to self-govern varied. As seen in Chapter Four, participants who were supportive of the proposal argued that Tokelau was already practically self-governing, so there was no further preparation necessary (for example Participant S11). On the other hand, participants critical of self-government argued that, while they saw self-government as a desirable long term goal for Tokelau to aspire to, Tokelau was not yet ready to self-govern (for example participants C14, C19, C36). Participants on both sides of the debate felt that one reason that people voted 'no' was that they understood the referendum package but did not think Tokelau was ready to make a success of self-government (explained by for example Participants C14, C19). The raising of such concerns in public forums was felt by participants to have swayed more people towards voting 'no' (for example Participant S23).

One reason that participants considered that Tokelau was not ready to self-govern was that the governance systems currently in place in Tokelau were not sufficient to cope with the new status. Of particular concern were financial management and decision making by the *taupulega*, and that Tokelau needed



infrastructure and economic development before changing its status. Participants who questioned Tokelau's readiness for self-government did not want to change Tokelau's governance structures, but argued there was a need for the operation of those structures to be improved through changes to current procedures and training for leaders and officials (for example argued by Participant C13). The complaints raised by these participants, as outlined in Chapter Four, equate with issues identified in the good governance approach. According to Macdonald (1998:23), as presented in Chapter Two, key facets of the good governance approach include transparency, accountability and effective public sectors.

Transparency and accountability are important for good governance because they allow the public to monitor and constrain the behaviour of their leaders and public servants. As previously referred to (Chapter Two), Crocombe (2001:549) explained that the aim of transparency and accountability is to ensure that decisions in the public sector are in the public's interests, rather than the personal interests of officials or leaders. One example of a problem relating to transparency in Tokelau raised by participants is that General Fono delegates tend not to take issues back to their communities for discussion, and *matai* do not consult with their families on issues before the *taupulega* (for example Participants C13). This reduces participation in the political process and therefore transparency of decision making (ADB, 2005:233). Participants felt that as well as people not being told the reasons for decisions, the decisions taken were also often not based on what people in the villages actually wanted or needed (for example explained by Participants C21, C28).

The interaction of non-government organisations with the public sector is important for 'good' governance (see Chapter Two). One example from the Pacific offered by Barrie Macdonald (1998:40-41) was that in Kiribati the traditional elite provided a check on government actions, because they continued to exercise informal power in the villages alongside formal government structures. Macdonald concluded that there was, therefore, a high level of transparency and accountability in Kiribati. In Tokelau this is not the case, because the traditional elite themselves forms the government. The lack of

an informal and traditional power structure alongside formal government structures means that there is no group in Tokelau that acts as an independent check or balance as was the case in Kiribati. Other community groups in Tokelau, such as the women's and men's groups in each village, do not appear to be consulted on council decisions or act as advocates on village issues. They are represented in the General Fono, but are expected to support their village leader's stance (referred to by Participants C5, C14), and were consulted in constitutional development and other decolonisation processes.

In the good governance approach, accountability refers to holding public figures responsible for their actions and the outcomes of the decisions they take (Henderson, 2002:9). One example given by participants of a lack of accountability in Tokelau was presented in the fieldwork data in Chapter Four. When discussing the arrangements made for the referendum in Chapter Four, it was noted that Tokelau's leaders had all formally agreed to support self-government, and as members of the Referendum Commission were personally tasked with implementing the education and information programme. There were also other people in the villages who as public employees should have been required to support the government decisions on self-determination. Despite these responsibilities, participants said that some of Tokelau's leaders and public officials did not participate in the implementation of the programme, or actively spoke out against self-government in the build up to the referendum (for example Participants S9, S23, S37). There have so far been no formal repercussions for these people for failing in their duties to the public, which demonstrates a lack of accountability measures within Tokelau's public sector. It could be argued that leaders and public servants are entitled to hold their own opinions. Even if this argument is accepted, there was ample opportunity during consultations and years of movement towards self-government for their concerns to be expressed and addressed, and some had even been directly part of the decision by the three *taupulega* and the General Fono to move towards self-determination. This example of lack of consequences for those who spoke out or did not fulfil their obligations would suggest that improving the accountability expected of Tokelau's leaders and officials is needed to improve governance in the territory.

Human resources make public sectors effective, as explained in Chapter Two, because people within organisations allocate the organisation's resources and implement its policies and programmes (Hulme & Turner, 1997:116). An example of the importance of human resource capacity in Tokelau can be seen in the area of advice from officials and the related policy decisions by the *taupulega*. Participants felt that the capacity of the *toeaina* to make modern government decisions was low, due to their low level of education, lack of outside exposure and reluctance to accept advice from younger people in the public service (for example Participants C5, S20, C21). Participants also saw that the quality of advice provided by public servants to the *taupulega* was often inadequate, due to a lack of educated people to employ in the public sector and often lack of skills in policy advice in those who were employed, who often came from service provision rather than policy backgrounds (for example Participants S9, C19). Participants said that in order to address the low capacity of the public sector there was a need to attract young Tokelauans to return to the islands once they were educated overseas to fill vacant or new positions, and for ongoing training in policy advice for current public servants (for example Participants C13, S20). In terms of other inputs such as funding and labour, participants saw a need for introductions of financial and management systems and training for both leaders and public servants (for example Participant C13). Therefore, from these descriptions by participants it can be seen that there are human resource capacity issues, as well as other shortcomings in the Tokelauan public sector's procedures and systems, that are likely to create barriers to the achievement of 'good' governance.

Examples of neopatrimonialism and localism, concepts which were discussed above in relation to political decision making in Tokelau, were also present in participants' responses regarding Tokelau's readiness for self-government. In relation to localism, the devolution, and the competitiveness between the three atolls that it enhanced, meant that participants felt that decisions were often not made for Tokelau's national good, but to serve village interests (for example by Participant C5). In Chapter Four it was also noted that there were claims by some participants of instances of neopatrimonial behaviour in Tokelau, such as

some *toeaina* ensuring their families received resources ahead of others in the villages (for example by Participant C21). The small size of Tokelau means that a small number of people, with many interweaving personal relationships, carry out several roles each, which creates many opportunities for such neopatrimonial behaviour. The filling of multiple roles by a few people, and their behaviour being perceived as favouring their own families, means that families that do not have a close relative in the *taupulega* or public service come to mistrust the motives of leaders and officials. Such families tend not to believe that leaders and officials will act in the best interest of everyone in Tokelau. For example, some people were not convinced that their leaders who promoted a 'yes' vote for self-government in the referendum did so because self-government was the best option for Tokelau. Instead people felt that leaders were primarily about the leaders' own or their families' benefits.

Concerns raised by participants about Tokelau's capacity to self-govern centred on the systems and procedures in place within the current governance structure. Participants also believed that Tokelau did not have sufficient infrastructure or an acceptable quality of social services. As explained in Chapter Two, under the good governance section, infrastructure and other developments are more likely to be successful with effective governance (for example argued by UNDP, 1999). Therefore, if the governance concerns were addressed, then economic development and the quality of services and infrastructure should also improve. In the fieldwork interview data presented in Chapter Four, self-government supporters among the interview participants acknowledged that the governance issues raised in the lead up to the referendum did exist. Supporters argued that such issues were more likely to be addressed once Tokelau was self-governing. There would be more incentives for improvements to be made when New Zealand stopped functioning as a safety net, and when there was more scrutiny practiced by other donors. There would also be potential to receive additional resources from new donors to fund programmes aimed at addressing the concerns raised by critics (for example argued by Participants S9, S11).

Capacity building in Tokelau's decolonisation programme has attempted to address governance issues through training of public servants and leaders in

policy and financial systems (MHT Project, 2002:5-6). However, as in any public sector, improvements can still be made. Some participants (for example Participant C36) argued that the New Zealand relationship may actually have added to difficulties and delays in implementing government decisions in Tokelau, as the relationship created complications in accountability, restricted Tokelau's options due to requirements to work within New Zealand regulations, and did not allow Tokelau to look elsewhere for support. These participants also argued that the focus on good governance and capacity building in Tokelau would not suddenly cease with a change in status.

The UN and New Zealand position relating to Tokelau's current readiness to become self-governing is based on the provision in the UN resolution on decolonisation that "inadequacy of political, economic, social or educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence" (See Chapter Two; UN General Assembly Resolution 1514(XV)). In addition, Tokelau is considered by New Zealand officials (Goff, 2005) and some Tokelauan research participants (for example Participants S11, S16) to be effectively self-governing already. There would be no immediate upheaval or changes to governance structures and systems post-assumption of formal self-government. This means that in effect opponents are arguing that Tokelau is not ready to move to a status which is effectively already in place, only the formal transition is yet to occur. Regardless of Tokelau virtually being self-governing already, the perceptions of some people in Tokelau about the impact of a change in status can be seen to have ultimately affected the outcome of the referendum. The effects of these perceptions on the outcome in turn relate back to the deficiencies in the education programme explained in the previous section, which were to some extent caused by the governance challenges faced in Tokelau.

## **Chapter summary**

This chapter first compared the formal decolonisation process in Tokelau to those undertaken in Niue and the Cook Islands. The mechanisms through which the three themes raised by fieldwork participants contributed to the



referendum outcome were then discussed, with particular reference to concepts of 'good' governance.

The first key point that should be taken from this chapter is that Tokelau's formal decolonisation process was advantaged compared to those in the Cook Islands and Niue, in terms of both its duration and its timing. These allowed more practical experience of self-government, more control of the process by Tokelau, and therefore the establishment of a governance structure that was more culturally appropriate.

Other key points in this discussion arise from the themes raised by participants in the fieldwork interviews, and relate to governance concepts and issues. Firstly, the pressure of localism as demonstrated in Tokelau's local divisions and rivalries affected the behaviour of leaders and voters alike. Some of Tokelau's leaders, for example, chose not to participate fully in the education and information programme, due perhaps to their vying for the honour of being the first leader of a self-governing Tokelau. Some voters based their choice of vote on personal or political factors arising rather than on issues of self-government.

Secondly, these divisions and rivalries affected the level of understanding of the self-government package among 'regular' Tokelauans. The rivalries affected the programme through the involvement of leaders as implementers, and through perceptions of the motives of implementers based on their alignment within the divisions. The politicisation of the programme through the involvement of leaders may have also lead to the issues not being explained in a balanced way. The lack of understanding was also affected by deficiencies in the education and information programme, such as its short time frame and intermittent nature.

Thirdly and finally, doubts about the readiness of Tokelau for self-government generally related to governance problems such as a lack transparency, accountability and human resources in the Tokelauan public sector. Critics of self-government argued that addressing these governance problems should be a prerequisite for self-determination. Governance problems in the public sector, in particular the low availability of staff who were highly knowledgeable about

the self-government package and the concepts it was based on, also contributed to the ineffectiveness of the education and information programme.

The following concluding chapter works through the contextual, theoretical and fieldwork information presented so far in order to answer proposed research questions and come to conclusions on the reasons that the 2006 self-determination referendum in Tokelau did not succeed.

## Chapter Six: Conclusion

On reflection, there is not one factor that can alone explain why the Tokelau self-determination referendum in 2006 failed to reach the required two-thirds majority in favour of self-government. The Tokelau experience of decolonisation was at least as good, and probably better, than in other New Zealand territories. The chronology of events in Tokelau has allowed much more time to attempt to address lessons learned in previous experiences and has taken new values into account, such as promotion of public participation in governance processes and appreciation of indigenous governance systems. Other factors combined to impact on the voters in Tokelau, and therefore the outcome of the referendum: local divisions and rivalries in Tokelau, a low level of understanding of the self-government package, and doubts over Tokelau's readiness to self-govern.

In order to reflect on the outcomes of this research and draw conclusions, this chapter first summarises the key points from Chapters One and Two which describe the context in which the referendum was undertaken, and some of the underlying processes and concepts that relate to the reasons for the referendum outcome. This is followed by a review of the ways in which the reasons for the referendum result were investigated, and the results of this enquiry. The research objectives outlined in Chapter One are then addressed, and an answer to the central research question is proposed. The chapter concludes with an outlook to the continuing decolonisation process in Tokelau and any prospective future referendum on self-government in the territory.

### **History and context of decolonisation in Tokelau**

The history and context of decolonisation in Tokelau is vital in understanding the referendum outcome, as they provide background to the processes and issues of which the referendum was a part. The history and context is both practical and conceptual, and is made up of Tokelau's local circumstances and past experiences, international processes of colonialism and decolonisation and their related ideas, and concepts and issues of governance in contemporary developing countries.

### ***Local context***

Tokelau's geography and history, people and culture, governance structure, economy and development, and experience of colonialism and decolonisation, as described in Chapter One, make up the local context in which the self-determination referendum was held. It was important to review this background information on Tokelau before addressing the details of the referendum and the reasons for its outcome. The picture built up in examining this background highlighted several key features of Tokelauan society, such as the primacy of village over national concerns, the custom of consensus decision making, and Tokelau's current development status, that were later described by participants as having contributed to the referendum outcome. It was also important to consider the processes that lead up to the referendum, which involved the development of the components of the package that was voted on in the referendum.

Tokelau has been under the control of foreign powers for over a century, and has been a territory of New Zealand for the last eight decades. Legislation enacted in New Zealand made Tokelau part of the dominion of New Zealand and made Tokelauans New Zealand citizens. Despite being the official ruler of Tokelau, New Zealand has taken a largely 'hands off' approach to this rule, with little interference in the day to day operation of the villages (Giese & Perez, 1983:139-40; Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:37). There has never been a New Zealand administrator based in Tokelau. Among Tokelauans, however, there remains a strong sense of linkages with and even dependency upon New Zealand, because Tokelau's small size, isolation, and limited resources mean that the territory is almost completely reliant on outside support. New Zealand is currently the main provider of this support. While there have been advances in terms of housing, communications and other infrastructure, there are still inadequacies in health and education in particular, which have led to many Tokelauans moving overseas in order to take advantage of better services.

The lack of a colonial presence in Tokelau appears to have allowed local customs and ideas to have more of an impact on eventual governance and decision-making arrangements, particularly in comparison to New Zealand's former

territories of the Cook Islands and Niue. While these countries adopted the Westminster model of their former colonial rulers, the contemporary governance structure of Tokelau is village-based. As was explained in Chapter One, in Tokelau national unity takes a back seat to loyalty to the village, even though the three villages share a common language and culture (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:5). The *taupulega* of each village control their own public services and staff, and delegate responsibility for issues of national concern 'back up' to the General Fono. The divergence of the governance approach from other established systems and the impact of culture is also seen in the focus on consensus decision-making within Tokelau, rather than the taking of a vote following an adversarial debate between different political parties (as described by Huntsman & Hooper, 1996:41).

The decolonisation process has been ongoing in Tokelau for more than four decades. As explained in Chapter One, a period of heightened focus and activity in Tokelau's decolonisation was initiated with the announcement in 1994 that Tokelau's leaders now felt ready to consider a change of status. Previously, since the first proposal by New Zealand for a status change in 1962, Tokelau's leaders had clearly stated that they were not willing to make such consideration. The Modern House of Tokelau project was a key part of the decolonisation process in the 1990s, and its outcomes included a reworking of Tokelau's governance structure into its present village-centred form. Tokelau has also formulated a constitution, negotiated the establishment of the Tokelau International Trust Fund, and worked with New Zealand to develop a draft Treaty of Free Association. This process culminated in the 2005 decision by Tokelau's leaders to hold a referendum on self-government in February 2006.

### ***Global context***

Tokelau, like most other developing countries, has been ruled by a foreign country for many years and has experienced a process of decolonisation, which is still ongoing today. It was important to review the ideas and processes of decolonisation and colonialism in order to place Tokelau's experience within this global context, and to compare it with previous decolonisation experiences. Colonialism and decolonisation were described in depth in Chapter Two.



Colonialism involved the establishment of external control over territories by metropolitan countries. In the South Pacific, including Tokelau, this control took the form of colonial rule, whereby a minority made up of expatriate administrators ruled over indigenous majorities. As explained in Chapter Two, it has been argued by several writers (for example Firth, 1997; Thompson, 1994) that colonial rule in the South Pacific was often paternalistic, autocratic and bureaucratic, with little involvement of local people. The focus of colonial rulers in the Pacific was initially to generate revenue through economic development and then, once this was achieved, to improve the wellbeing of local colonial subjects through the introduction of public health and education services.

The end of colonial rule in the South Pacific began with the independence of Samoa in 1962. Full decolonisation of the region, however, has not yet been fully achieved with the continued existence of territories of New Zealand, the United States and France. The last Pacific nation to become independent was Vanuatu in 1980.

Decolonisation is a process of transferring control from an external country to a local government (Neemia, 1992). The key features of decolonisation are constitutional development and local public sector capacity building, which were clearly the priority in the decolonisation processes in Tokelau and the rest of the South Pacific. The UN plays a key role in decolonisation, as it sets the international legal framework for the process and monitors its implementation. The three options for self-determination defined by the UN are independence, integration, or free association (UN, 2005b). Colonialism and decolonisation had several effects, particularly in the area of good governance, which are still important in Tokelau and other developing countries today.

### ***Governance concepts***

Improvements in economic and social welfare in developing countries are now seen in theory and practice to be dependent on effective governance (for example UNDP, 1999). Governance in developing countries is influenced by the legacies of colonial rule and decolonisation. Colonial rule created new national

entities and then introduced new government systems to them. Decolonisation processes usually formalised and entrenched these governance structures and ideas about decision making processes. Local contexts in developing countries, including those in Tokelau, affect the ways in which these introduced governance structures function in practice. If the introduced systems and ideas of good governance are not compatible with local customs and traditions, problems such as neopatrimonialism can arise. As Hulme and Turner (1997) explain, neopatrimonialism is where modern government systems and positions are used to meet local or family needs ahead of national or public concerns. One of the challenges to achieving good governance in the South Pacific is the interaction of introduced governance systems with local customs such as consensus decision making, the primacy of family and village obligations, and traditions of gift-giving.

The 'good' governance approach aims to address such governance challenges through improvements in areas related to transparency, accountability and human resource capacity (as summarised by Macdonald, 1998). Although some argue that the good governance approach is an extension of colonialism through the imposition of Western ideas on developing societies (for example Henderson, 2002; Macdonald, 1998), the concepts that underlie the approach clearly came through as being important in Tokelau's ongoing progress to self-determination. Information on governance concepts and issues was included in the literature review because many of the issues raised during the enquiry into the reasons for the referendum outcome were related to or examples of such governance challenges or ideas.

## **Investigation of the reasons for the referendum outcome**

One central aim of this research was to identify the reasons for the referendum outcome and, in particular, to investigate what Tokelauans themselves saw as factors contributing to that outcome. Tokelauans' ideas about the referendum were discovered by undertaking fieldwork in the three villages of Tokelau over a period of two months. The fieldwork utilised a method of semi-structured interviewing, using an interview guide comprising five questions, which was detailed in Chapter Three. This method was chosen because it would, as argued

by May (2001:123), allow participants to raise the issues they felt were most important rather than limit discussion to those issues chosen by the interviewer. This method at the same time provided a degree of comparability between participants, which enabled analysis and drawing out of themes. Thirty-seven participants were interviewed, who came from a variety of backgrounds and were all currently living in Tokelau's villages. The data from these interviews was analysed through a process of coding and collating, the results of which were presented in Chapter Four.

Participants' responses were grouped into three main themes in Chapter Four. These themes were: political rivalries and divisions, lack of understanding of the issues and concepts relating to self-government, and a feeling that Tokelau is not ready for self-government. The first theme covered divisions within and between villages and in the public service. Participants felt that these divisions and rivalries affected the referendum outcome because people based their decisions on personal or political factors rather than on their opinions of the self-government package (for example as argued by Participants S6, S22).

The second theme included perceived deficiencies in the education and information programme (for example as seen by Participants C4, S9, S24), and Tokelauan ways of thinking (for example described by Participants C2, S7) which hindered people's ability to understand the issues involved.

The third theme contained arguments from participants that improvements need to be made in Tokelau before the territory should consider becoming self-governing (argued by for example Participants C14, C19, C36). Participants considered that there was a need for improvement in the areas of governance, infrastructure and services, and economic development.

The three themes seen in the research outcomes all relate in various ways to governance concepts presented in the literature review in Chapter Two, which were summarised above. Tokelau's local divisions and rivalries are an example of a form of neopatrimonialism called 'localism', which refers to the pressures of, for example, village situations and needs on leaders and officials to act in a

certain way (as argued by Larmour, 1998 in Chapter Two). Many of the issues of good governance agenda were also raised as concerns in relation to Tokelau's readiness to self-govern, including transparency, accountability and human resources. The divisions and rivalries and perceived governance deficiencies in turn affected the education and information programme and as a consequence the level of understanding in the villages of the self-government package.

## **Research outcomes**

The three central objectives of this thesis were outlined in Chapter One, and related to Tokelau's formal decolonisation process, general attitudes in Tokelau towards self-government, and the factors behind the referendum outcome. These three objectives, and their related underlying questions, are addressed in order below.

### ***Comparing decolonisation processes***

The first objective of the research was to examine the decolonisation process leading up to the referendum, in order to compare the process in Tokelau to previous experiences in New Zealand territories. The related underlying question for this objective was: *Was there anything different about the formal decolonisation process in Tokelau, compared to other decolonisation processes undertaken by New Zealand, which may have affected the referendum outcome?*

This objective was partially met in Chapter Five where it was argued that the decolonisation process in Tokelau had several advantages in comparison to those undergone in the Cook Islands and Niue. To fully address this objective and comprehensively answer its underlying question, however, further investigation and comparison would be necessary of the details of the Cook Islands and Niue decolonisation process in terms of the issues of local divisions, understanding of concepts and perceptions of readiness for self-government that have been raised in this research on Tokelau.

The first advantage in the Tokelau decolonisation process over those in the Cook Islands and Niue was that the extended timeframe for self-determination

allowed Tokelau to experience the introduction and operation of a national government and a nationalised public service, and then to form its own views of and approaches to its governance structure. As seen in Chapter Five and noted above, this meant that the governance structure in place in Tokelau at the time of the referendum and to be enshrined in the constitution is based in Tokelauan culture and traditions, and therefore should be more stable and effective than has been experienced with introduced governance systems elsewhere in the South Pacific.

The reason that the decolonisation process in Tokelau was more advantaged than the processes in Niue and the Cook Islands was that new approaches prevalent in the world by the time decolonisation intensified and accelerated in Tokelau led to more input into and control over the process by Tokelauans, including in the development of the constitution and decisions about the education programme and general arrangements for the referendum. Modern notions of public participation were also reflected in the process.

The quality of the formal decolonisation processes in Tokelau has therefore been at least equal to, and probably greater than, the same process in other New Zealand territories. This was not reflected in the referendum outcome, however, and therefore the key focus of this research was to uncover the other factors which led Tokelauans to vote against self-government.

### ***Differing opinions on self-government in Tokelau***

The second objective of the research was to explore general attitudes towards self-government among Tokelauans living in the islands. The underlying question corresponding to this objective was: *How do Tokelauans view the proposed change in status, and what are the reasons for these views?* The answer to this question can be found in the fieldwork interview data relating to the theme of perceptions of Tokelau's readiness to self-govern, in turn meeting this objective. There appear to be two strong modes of thinking among Tokelauans regarding the territory's ability to self-govern and the possible outcomes of changing its status, and therefore whether it is currently a desirable move for Tokelau to make.



Participants who were critical of self-government argued that until certain issues had been addressed it was currently too risky for Tokelau to change its status. This category of participants argued there was a need for a more stable base in terms of economic development, governance processes and infrastructure and services to ensure that Tokelau could run itself effectively (for example Participants C14, C19 C36). There was also a common argument in the villages that New Zealand had not fulfilled its obligations to Tokelauans as New Zealand citizens, and therefore the status quo should be kept and New Zealand held to those obligations (for example argued by Participant C1).

Promoters of self-government on the other hand saw changing Tokelau's status as an opportunity to develop and move forward. These proponents of the package saw Tokelau as virtually self-governing already, and a need to formalise that status through the Constitution and Treaty (for example Participants S11, S16). Self-government supporters among the participants acknowledged many of the same concerns raised by critics in relation to economic development, service and infrastructure standards, and governance challenges. In contrast to the critics though, supportive participants argued that formal self-government was needed in order to address these issues, because it would offer increased availability of external assistance, and self-government would provide the need and motivation to both implement new programmes and address current issues.

### ***Factors in the referendum outcome***

The third and final objective of the research was to identify the factors that had an effect on the referendum outcome. The question underlying this objective was: *What do Tokelauans consider to be the main factors behind the referendum outcome?* This objective was met fully through the undertaking of fieldwork in Tokelau to discover the local interpretations of and explanations for the referendum result, and analysis of the data gained during this fieldwork which was then presented in Chapter Five.

As was found in addressing the first objective of this research, the decolonisation process in Tokelau was, at minimum equivalent to, and probably

more effective than those undergone elsewhere. Other explanations must therefore be sought for the failure of the self-government proposal to pass in Tokelau. Such explanations are found in the responses of participants recorded during the fieldwork undertaken in Tokelau. As outlined above, the factors that were raised by participants as having contributed to the negative referendum result were grouped into three main themes: local rivalries and divisions, lack of understanding of the package, and misgivings as to Tokelau's readiness for self-government. The findings in relation to the second objective can therefore be seen as influencing the referendum outcome. In fact, all of the themes raised by participants can be seen to relate to various governance problems present in Tokelau.

The first theme described how Tokelau's local divisions and rivalries affected the referendum outcome, including divisions within villages such as 'the Pastor situation' in Atafu or longstanding political foes in the other two villages, rivalry between the atolls and a divided national leadership, and disgruntled and resentful public servants. These divisions were expressed in the lead up to the referendum in the raising of concerns by 'campaigners' and the lack of participation in the education and information programme by some leaders (for example explained by Participants S6, S23). It was shown in Chapter Five how the divisions and rivalries between and within Tokelau's villages created localistic and neopatriomonal pressures on Tokelau's leaders and voters to act in certain ways. For example, some leaders chose not to adequately explain the referendum package to their villages, as a result of their alignment with a particular side of a village division. This and other instances led to the characterisation by participants of the choice to vote 'yes' or 'no' as being based on political or personal concerns rather than individual opinions of the package.

The argument behind the second theme of reasons for the proposal being unsuccessful was that many Tokelauans did not understand the referendum package and the concepts relating to self-government in general (for example Participants S11, A17, A18, S27, C29). This low level of comprehension left some people both more susceptible to direct influence by 'campaigners' as they looked for further clarification of the issues, and more likely to be made nervous and

doubtful about self-government when concerns were aired in public and the divided national leadership became apparent. As discussed in Chapter Five, the lack of comprehension among Tokelauan villagers of the self-government package was influenced by the local divisions and rivalries. In addition to other deficiencies such as time constraints and lack of continuity, these divisions meant that the information and education programme was compromised and therefore less effective than it needed to be to address the lack of understanding of the package in the island communities. Governance issues such as low human resource capacity in the public sector also limited the delivery and effectiveness of the education and information programme. People who did not adequately understand the proposal therefore saw voting 'no' as a vote for the known versus the, to them, unknown status of self-government.

The third theme of factors in the referendum outcome was that sections in all three communities did not agree with the proposal because they felt that Tokelau was not ready to self-govern (for example Participants C14, C19, C36). Concerns about Tokelau's readiness were wide-ranging, and related to governance structures and processes such as accountability, transparency, human resource capacity, and financial systems, economic development, and the current standards of infrastructure and services in the villages. Many of the doubts raised by participants with regard to Tokelau's readiness for self-government were related to governance problems in Tokelau's public sector such as lack of transparency, accountability, and human resource capacity (see Chapter Five). These governance problems had an effect on the referendum's outcome through the significance placed on them by some Tokelauans who saw their resolution as being vital before self-government could proceed, and therefore voted 'no' to the proposal.

### **Why was the self-government proposal unsuccessful?**

The central research question of this thesis was: *Why was the proposal for Tokelau to become self-governing unsuccessful in the 2006 referendum?* There is not one discrete answer to this question. Rather there were three themes of factors that interacted and compounded each others' effects.

Divisions and rivalries within and between Tokelau's villages influenced both the behaviour of Tokelau's leaders and officials in the build up to the referendum, and the decision of voters whether to vote 'yes' or 'no' on polling day. These divisions and rivalries also affected the education and information programme, by taking the focus off the issues and concepts relating to self-government and onto people's opinions of the individuals who were tasked with explaining those issues and concepts. The education and information programme came to be perceived by some participants as propaganda to force self-government through rather than a balanced explanation of the advantages and disadvantages of both a 'yes' or 'no' referendum result.

The low level of comprehension of the issues was due to the political interference in the education and information programme as described above, as well as several other perceived deficiencies in that programme and the challenge posed by the prevailing 'Tokelau mindset'. The programme was seen to have been too condensed, too rushed, and too sporadic, which meant that not enough time was allowed for people to digest the information and ask for clarification.

The 'Tokelau mindset' was explained by participants as comprising a narrow world view, resistance to change, and sense of dependency. This mindset created challenges in the implementation of the education programme which were not fully addressed. The low level of comprehension in the villages meant that those people who did not clearly understand the package were more likely to be influenced against the proposal by 'campaigners' and questioners and by the pressures arising from local divisions and rivalries.

The existence of doubt among many Tokelauans who did understand the proposal as to the readiness of Tokelau to become self-governing worked together with the other two factors above in leading to the negative referendum result. People who questioned the benefits of Tokelau becoming self-governing, and raised concerns about the consequences of such a move given Tokelau's current governance, economic development and 'infrastructural' limitations, were seen to be motivated to raise these questions and concerns publicly by

their alignment in the village, national, or public service divisions and rivalries. As stated above, those people who did not understand the package as explained in the education and information programme were more open to influence from this public airing of concerns than they would have been if they had better comprehended self-government issues.

It is therefore concluded that, due to all these interlinkages and interactions, the three themes raised by participants cannot be separated or prioritised, but had combined and cumulative effects on the referendum outcome.

## **Outlook**

In August 2006, the General Fono took a decision to hold a second referendum on self-government in November 2007. At this stage preparations are still on track for this event to take place as planned. In order for the new referendum to be a success, there should be awareness of the factors behind the outcome of the previous referendum that have been described and discussed in this thesis.

The views of participants demonstrate that, while local ownership of the process is important, gaps in capacity and implementation may need to be addressed in order for people to be fully engaged and informed. A lack of capacity can also lead to a perceived lack of neutrality, in that difficult questions are not addressed and there are opportunities for political influences to enter and even take control of the debate. When people's questions are not answered, or they are offered conflicting views without access to neutral clarification, the confusion that results will see people more likely to vote against a proposal. This was demonstrated in Tokelau's 2006 self-determination referendum.

Tokelau is a small country and public education and participation would therefore appear to be more likely to be successful. However, the factors that influenced the outcome of the 2006 self-governance referendum show that local and political divisions can have as much as, if not more, impact on voting behaviour in comparison to places with larger populations. In addition, the country's isolation from outside views and ideas makes a well-planned and ongoing programme of education and open discussions extremely important.



Overall, however, interview participants appeared very much informed of the issues, and raised valid concerns about governance and economic development issues. These issues should be the subject of continued debate, and officials in both Tokelau and New Zealand should encourage and be involved in discussions aimed at addressing concerns about transparency, accountability, and public participation in decision-making, regardless of the outcome of the next referendum.

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## Appendices

### ***Appendix A: Colonisation and decolonisation of the South Pacific***

Country	Colonial power	Date of colonisation	Current status	Date of decolonisation
American Samoa	United States	1899	Dependency/part of colonial power	n/a
Cook Islands	New Zealand	1901	Self-governing in free association	1965
Fiji	Britain	1874	Independent	1970
French Polynesia	France	1842	Dependency/part of colonial power	n/a
Hawai'i	United States	1893	Dependency/part of colonial power	n/a
West Papua	Netherlands	1842	Dependency/part of colonial power	n/a
	Indonesia	1962		
Kiribati	Britain	1892	Independent	1979
Nauru	Germany	1888	Independent	1968
	Australia	1920*		
New Caledonia	France	1853	Dependency/part of colonial power	n/a
Niue	New Zealand	1901	Self-governing in free association	1974
Papua New Guinea	Germany & Britain	1884	Independent	1975
	Australia	1920*		
Pitcairn	Britain	1898	Dependency/part of colonial power	n/a
Rapanui	Chile	1888	Dependency/part of colonial power	n/a
Samoa	Germany	1899	Independent	1962
	New Zealand	1920*		
Solomon Islands	Britain	1893	Independent	1978
Tokelau	Britain	1899	Dependency/part of colonial power	n/a
	New Zealand	1926		
Tonga	Britain	1900	Independent	1970
Tuvalu	Britain	1892	Independent	1978
Vanuatu	France & Britain	1886	Independent	1980
Wallis & Futuna	France	1842	Dependency/part of colonial power	n/a

\*Control taken from Germany at outset of World War One, official control granted under League of Nations mandates in 1920.

Sources: adapted from Centre for Pacific Island Studies (2004), Colbert (1997), and Crocombe (2001).

***Appendix B: UN list of non-self-governing territories***

Territory	Administering power
American Samoa	United States
Anguilla	Britain
Bermuda	Britain
British Virgin Islands	Britain
Cayman Islands	Britain
Falkland Islands	Britain
Gibraltar	Britain
Guam	United States
Montserrat	Britain
New Caledonia	France
Pitcairn	Britain
St. Helena	Britain
Tokelau	New Zealand
Turks & Caicos Islands	Britain
United States Virgin Islands	United States
Western Sahara	Spain

Source: UN (2005b).