

1. A Changing Oceania

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Bilan: Politique, Développement et Sécurité en Océanie

La configuration de la puissance dans la grande région Asie-Pacifique connaît actuellement des changements très importants avec la montée de la Chine comme puissance mondiale. L'influence de cette dernière se fait sentir à travers l'augmentation de l'aide et le développement du commerce et des relations diplomatiques, surtout avec Fidji. L'unité régionale dans le Pacifique connaît quelques tensions, surtout suite au coup d'Etat de Fidji de 2006 : L'Australie, la Nouvelle-Zélande ainsi que les Etats polynésiens et micronésiens sont opposés au régime militaire alors que les Etats mélanésiens continuent à reconnaître son chef, le commodore Bainimarama. Les indicateurs de développement et de gouvernance des pays insulaires sont contrastés mais globalement satisfaisants, la plupart se situant dans une assez large plage autour de la moyenne mondiale. Sur le plan politique, la région a connu à la fois la stabilité et l'instabilité, mais la plupart des petits Etats sont parvenus à « s'en sortir » en cas de crise. La professionnalisation croissante des responsables de l'administration publique, le développement d'organisations au sein de la société civile et leur rôle grandissant dans les politiques publiques et dans leur mise en œuvre, ajoutés à la réaction positive des donateurs en faveur des Etats insulaires, produisent des résultats plus positifs dans les petits Etats. Le besoin d'analyser et de développer les relations entre les Etats insulaires anglophones et francophones d'Océanie est toujours présent.

Asia-Pacific: Power Shifts

As the first decade of the 21st century drew to a close – and morphed into the second – it had become obvious that in the broad Asia-Pacific region dramatic political, strategic and socio-economic change was underway. A 'power shift' was the description applied by strategic affairs specialist, Professor Hugh White of The Australian National University, in which as Asia's 'strategic plates shift' a new Asian power balance arises requiring all states to negotiate a relationship with China. The productivity revolution that is transforming China, White asserts, is 'reordering the world'. Asia and the region will become more contested over the next few decades and the larger powers including Australia will have to reassess defence and security risks – as well as the costs of addressing them.

Former Australian Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans (subsequently head of the International Crisis Group), went further and described these changes in the Asia-Pacific regional power equation as a 'tectonic shift' with repercussions not only regionally, but for the global balance as a whole.

The significance of these developments and their interpretations is contested. Michael Wesley (Head of the Lowy Institute for International Affairs) suggests this does not mean an inevitable direct Chinese challenge to American primacy in the region – nor that China's neighbours will fall immediately into line with Beijing. Wesley's book – which underlines the importance of adding India to the Asia-Pacific equation – analyses the 'new highways of power' across Asia. 'China and India have arrived as major shapers of the how the world works, and their preferences, enthusiasms and aversions will have a strong effect on the choices that other societies face,' he contends. They will be key shapers of globalisation in the 21st century, but they will be acutely sensitive 'to their dependence on the outside world for the oxygen of their development'. Asia will not simply settle into an ordered hierarchy under Chinese leadership – forces from outside the Indo-Pacific will play decisive roles in the evolving region.

Other analysts have seen China's rise as unsettling the established order and prompting a reappraisal of the fundamentals of Asia-Pacific security, yet still providing room to move and scope for creativity for middle powers such as Australia. Former Australian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Kevin Rudd, noted a 'strategic uneasiness' accompanying China's rise and suggested the need for an Asia-Pacific regional security dialogue arrangement of some kind. The US government had little doubt about the significance of China's rise and of the need for the West to ensure there was balance at least in the emerging Asia-Pacific strategic equation. President Obama's reference in late 2011 to a 'pivot to Asia' in American strategic thinking and security posture from the Middle East to the Asia Pacific signalled US thinking about that balance.

The Island Pacific

Within the Pacific Islands region itself these 'power shifts' and their geo-strategic and security implications in the broad Asia-Pacific region have not gone unnoticed – nor have they been without some impact. China's rise to international prominence had led also to an increased Chinese official interest and presence in the Pacific Islands region. Chinese diplomacy including official visits, increased aid to the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) and particularly to the Melanesian Spearhead Group, commercial investment and migration activity

had increased substantially in the past decade. Lowy Institute analysts estimate that \$200m in Chinese grants and soft loans have been made to the PICs: in contrast to USAID allocations of \$4m.

A product of a globalising China, this outreach has paralleled China's expansion into Africa and South America (that is, to other developing country regions) in search of trade and commercial opportunities and imports of raw materials for its industrial expansion. China analyst at The Australian National University, Graeme Smith, argues that this expansion is not necessarily state-directed – nor is it likely to be state-controlled. An important element in China's foray into the 'developing world' has been the diminution of its long-standing rivalry with Taiwan.

All the PICs have been impacted to some extent and will continue to be impacted as China extends its reach across the Third World in search of markets, materials and influence. China's exports to the region have increased their market share of all exports to the PICs from 1.5 per cent in 1998 to an estimated 8.5 per cent in 2008. Chinese goods now constitute 11 per cent of Papua New Guinea's imports, while Solomon Islands has rapidly increased its exports to China through sales of timber.

The PICs stand to benefit from a greater range of relatively cheap trade-store goods and building materials; through educational opportunities on offer for PIC university-level students to study in Chinese institutions (Samoa, for example, has over 100 undergraduates currently in Chinese academies); through construction programs such as the delivery of office buildings to Samoa; and from Chinese outbound tourism. For the PICs – and for Papua New Guinea in particular – market and trading opportunities have been expanded. Interestingly, this enhanced Chinese presence has not meant that PICs have had to choose between it and their long-standing regional neighbours, partners and donors. China's rising influence has also had political spin-off, for example, by providing the military regime in Fiji with an opportunity to play the 'China card' to relieve or stymie pressure from Australia and New Zealand for it (Fiji) to return to civilian democratic government.

'Ripple Effect'

In response to China's increasing interest and activity in the Pacific Islands a 'ripple effect' of sorts has occurred. More attention has been paid to the PICs by their 'traditional' partners Australia and New Zealand; but also by the United States, described by one commentator as 'an absent-minded ally' of the Islands. Aware of Fiji's Commodore Bainimarama's interest in China (and his visits there) and also aware that China had not criticised the Bainimarama coup but had in

fact increased its aid to Fiji after the coup event, US Secretary for State, Hillary Clinton, held talks in 2010 with Fiji's Foreign Minister Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, canvassing a stronger partnership and dialogue with Fiji and proposing to open a USAID office in Fiji in 2011. US interest in the Pacific Islands was also iterated by Kurt Campbell, US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, at a US Congressional hearing in 2010 at which he also spoke of a desire for stronger partnership and dialogue with Fiji. These discussions were not couched in the language of 'threat analysis', but were mildly cautionary in tone and reaffirming of common interests and commitments to liberal democracy, peace and security within the region as a whole. Japan was similarly exercised that Fiji not be pushed closer to China.

Australia's Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs, Richard Marles, in a September 2011 address, 'Why the Pacific matters?', similarly offered affirmations of Australia's commitment and connections to the Islands region – a statement addressed to both Pacific and Australian audiences. While Marles did not explicitly mention China, Australia's clear concern was that Fiji not be pushed into a Chinese embrace. Marles stated:

We are the Pacific's major security partner. We are the Pacific's major economic partner. We are its largest aid donor – around half of the world's development assistance to the Pacific comes from Australia. We continue to be connected by a deeply rooted network of personal, business, sporting and community ties. Our geography dictates that we have a shared destiny.

Earlier the then Australian Foreign Minister, Stephen Smith, had urged China not to undermine Australian and regional efforts for Fiji to hold elections. The Australian 2020 Summit reported that China had become more visible, more focused economically, but seemed not to know what its own aims were in the PIC region. China had indeed increased its trade and aid to the Pacific; but overt competition with other donors or proselytising on its part had not been apparent. Scholars and foreign policy makers in universities and think tanks across the Pacific continue to grapple with what China's rise means for security and development in the Islands.

The extent to which China's global rise will lead to strategic rivalry between and among the larger powers in the Asia-Pacific region and which may impact the security and well-being of the Pacific Island states remains unclear. Much depends on how an intended 'pivot' in US strategic and security policy from the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific is framed and the extent to which it heightens tensions between the larger powers of the region. The potential for such rivalry may also be limited by the creation of mechanisms for dialogue and accommodation among the region's larger powers.

PIC Economies and Politics

Within the 'Island Pacific' itself changes were also underway – domestically and regionally. Change in the Island Pacific is a product not so much of the geopolitics of the larger extra-regional powers but is essentially set by: continuing concerns within the Island states over the management of economic fragility and the generation of broad-based development; the political and social dynamics within Island polities that are so often the product of local political cultures and generational changes in leadership; and by intra-regional relations between the PICs themselves and between the PICs and their aid and development 'partners'.

The Island groups that constitute the French Pacific Territories – New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna, and French Polynesia – occupy a somewhat enigmatic position in the broad Pacific Islands community. While clearly 'in and of' the Pacific region, and occupied with their own particular internal dynamics, they are not as yet fully or meaningfully engaged with the 'Anglophone' Island states of the Pacific.

The global economic crisis that shook economies the world over in 2008-09 had impacted adversely upon the PICs. Economies weakened significantly as tourism, agriculture, and manufacturing industries slowed with the fall in global demand. Remittances declined by as much as 20 per cent and the value of the region's public offshore investment funds shrank as international equity prices slumped. As a consequence, government revenues contracted and essential services, maintenance and infrastructure developments were delayed, and jobs were lost. The slowdown across the Islands region was exacerbated by a series of wild storms in early 2009 that disrupted communications and the tourist industry particularly in Fiji, and by the economic and physical impact of the tsunami later that year in Samoa and Tonga.

But the PICs 'navigated the global storm' (the title of an Asian Development Bank publication) and remained in reasonably good shape economically and politically. A briefing paper for the Forum Economic Ministers in mid-2011 expected the Pacific Islands' economies to remain on the path to recovery from the GFC, though with a slow growth for the Islands' economies of approximately 2-3 per cent per annum in the early part of the decade. Were the rapid growth rates for Papua New Guinea and Timor Leste to be factored-in, an overall regional growth rate of 5-6 per cent per annum was forecast.

Improved growth figures in the early part of the decade for the PICs' major trading partners – particularly Australia and New Zealand – were expected to support the recovery of growth rates in the PICs through an increase in tourism, improved remittance flows and infrastructure expenditures. Rising demand for food and other soft commodities especially from China may also have a positive

impact for those PICs with fisheries and agriculture exports. Timber exporters – such as Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea – will also benefit from higher prices for timber products in Asia. The expected decline in timber export incomes for Solomons, as its loggable forests are depleted, may be compensated for by a rise in mining earnings. ADB simulations of long-term growth prospects for the non-mining PICs for the next two decades indicated a yearly growth rate of 1 per cent to 3 per cent. (World Economic Outlook Update, IMF, 2011)

Regional officials and international agencies had noted that an important economic governance lesson had been learned from the GFC crisis experience in that ‘policy-based programs’ helped sustain the political appetite for reforms, even during difficult times. In the Cook Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Tonga, extensive SOE and infrastructure governance improvements were implemented during an economic recession and in election years. Even in countries where there were changes in government, commitment to the programs has been sustained pointing to enhanced resolve and confidence in domestic economic management.

Regionalism: Under Stress

The Pacific Islands Forum remains the predominant regional political organisation, but strains within and between the PIC member states have become prominent since the coup in Fiji in 2006. Australia and New Zealand successfully sought the exclusion of Fiji from the Forum because of the coup, but this prompted a reaction from the Melanesian states which embraced the Bainimarama regime and strengthened the sub-regional grouping known as the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG). That in turn led not so much to a ‘rift’ among Forum Island members, but certainly to an increase in the antipathy of Polynesian leaders to their western regional counterparts (and perhaps vice-versa). A new MSG headquarters building in Port Vila had only recently been funded by aid from China.

Doubts subsequently emerged about the effectiveness of the Forum as a regional political agency charged with enhancing collaboration in economic, trade, aid and diplomatic relations with international donors and development agencies and about its ability to build stronger intra-regional cooperation and a higher international profile. The location of the Forum’s headquarters in Fiji is a factor in the organisation’s decline in potency. While the coup regime remains in power in Fiji a strengthening of the region’s political voice is not in prospect. The regionalist effort has thus to some extent become a casualty of the Fiji coup.

At the working level, the *Pacific Plan*, adopted in 2005 for strengthening regional cooperation and integration, has focused largely on making the

existing regional organisations more effective; for example on fishing regulation, maritime surveillance, climate change mitigation intervention, regional education systems, strengthening the ombudsman and audit institutions and on development assistance coordination. But the key functional area of greatest moment to the PICs is progress on key regional trade agreements and potentially the integration of markets – an area, however, in which there have been few significant results. And there remain continuing doubts about the viability of the Forum Secretariat's efforts in this direction. Pacific economist Satish Chand has commented that it was the security concerns of the major powers that shaped regionalism – and they still remain important factors – but trade integration is not a significant factor contributing to regionalism today. Pacific Island countries, he suggests, may want to pursue trade liberalisation unilaterally.

The South Pacific Community (SPC), however, with its headquarters in New Caledonia has been a beneficiary of this regional strengthening process with policy coordinating responsibilities for the major technical agencies of the region including the region's fisheries and environmental organisations now falling within its ambit.

PIC Domestic Political Trends

Through the early years of the 21st century, Pacific Island countries experienced degrees of both turbulence and stability. Fiji has been the most conflicted with its history of coups – the most recent occurring in December 2006 with Commodore Frank Bainimarama's seizure of power from a civilian government following a breakdown in power-sharing arrangements between leaders of the country's communally based parties. Bainimarama subsequently consolidated his authority in 2009 by dismissing the Court of Appeal judges (and all the judiciary) who had found his coup illegal, abrogating the constitution, and transferring total control of the country to himself and his military forces for a period of five years. He has proceeded to shake up the institutional fabric of the Fijian polity by challenging both the long-established order of its eastern-based chiefly authority and that of the Methodist Church. The Commodore has held out the prospect of elections in 2014, but the question now remains: is the military ever likely to withdraw from the political scene?

Solomon Islands politics and society has been disturbed dramatically by over a decade-long period of ethnic tension precipitated in the late 1990s on Guadalcanal and which led in its initial stages to conflict, the loss of several hundred lives, considerable damage to property and sharpened antagonism between peoples from the islands of Guadalcanal and Malaita. An intervention by regional forces from the Pacific led by Australian police and military personnel stabilised the

situation. While open conflict was contained, the mistrust generated and the disruption to services and to confidence across the nation impacted strongly on the economy and the body politic. Shifting factional alignments within the Parliament and frequent changes of Prime Ministers via Parliamentary ballots, together with the raiding of the country's timber resources through exploitation by 'foreign loggers', have limited the prospect of responsible and reformist government and for the building of an effective state. In fact, it has been suggested that a 'shadow state' of sorts exists in Solomons with influences outside the formal state structure continuing to exercise control over resources and key development decisions.

Papua New Guinea – the largest of the PICs – has a substantial resource base with oil, natural gas, copper and gold deposits, forests and fisheries stocks, all of which provide a solid foundation for long-term income generation and national wealth. Its problems are those of political and economic management, hefty population growth and of service delivery to its six million people across a rugged topography. It has a democratic though fractious political system with security of tenure for coalition governments being problematic – a situation made even more so by a 2010 Supreme Court ruling that allowed MPs to move amongst parties at will. Its rambunctious, 'spoils' and patronage type politics in which parties have little consistent platform or ideology mean that state/public resources are readily squandered. Papua New Guinea's political leadership, however, is undergoing a generational shift and its bureaucracies (central and provincial) are beginning to develop policy and implementation traction which may augur well for future policy-making and administration. Election outcomes in mid-2012 will provide a significant marker for stability or otherwise.

Vanuatu is the more stable of the 'authority-lite' Melanesian states despite having had a history of 'revolving-door' ministerial appointments and fluid (re) placements of senior administrators. It is noteworthy that one of the gurus of 'state-building' theory and practice, Francis Fukuyama, a few years ago, took an interest in Melanesia's conundrum of 'strong societies and weak states' and the relative absence of – and difficulty in establishing – central authority.

Samoa – which gained its independence from New Zealand in 1962 – is the region's most stable polity characterised by a one-party-dominant political system, few changes of government, and an extremely able bureaucracy. It has benefited from the continuance of a bonded, hierarchical political culture; an early history of anti-colonialism; a well-developed education system; a close and continuing relationship with New Zealand; and a diaspora which is diligent in sending remittances to relatives in Samoa. Samoa's domestic critics decry the degree of control exercised by the ruling party (the Human Rights Protection Party), though its civil society is active and informed. The Kingdom of Tonga – unified in the mid-19th century – is transiting gradually from a

benign monarchical system to a form of democratic governance. The first ever democratic poll in 2010 produced a reformist-orientated government, though radical change is not on the agenda.

The Micronesian states of Kiribati, Tuvalu, Nauru, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, along with the small Polynesian state of Tuvalu, are small but generally reasonably stable political entities. But they all face the constraints of distance, small size, small populations and limited resource bases in formulating national development strategies. All are dependent on foreign aid and on remittances from their nationals abroad. National income from, for example, fisheries exploitation has been less momentous than anticipated at independence. Cook Islands and Niue enjoy a special independence in association relationship with New Zealand. Their politics – as with most of the smaller island states – are essentially ‘family politics’ and rarely do situations arise that threaten their stability.

Indicators of Development and Governance

In attempting to assess the relative strengths, weaknesses and durability or otherwise of states within the international system; to gauge their relative levels of political, economic and human development; and to estimate how well or otherwise a particular state can withstand crises or the threat of state failure, a raft of indicators and indexes have been developed.

Some have proven useful to our analysis of development in the Pacific region – others not. Most offer an interesting guide to how well or otherwise a particular state is progressing relative say to its neighbour – or to similarly-sized states elsewhere in the globe. They are not necessarily analytical tools in themselves, but they are useful to policy makers, governors and civil society organisations within these states in identifying areas of governance, economy and polity that might be supported or strengthened. Donor agencies find them of some value in identifying areas and programs to support. Some of the more regularly used indexes are briefly canvassed below.

The *World Governance Indicators* represent the aggregate views on the quality of governance in countries across the globe drawn from a survey of enterprise, citizen and expert respondents in think tanks and other institutes within each country. Most Pacific Island countries are surveyed for the WGI and their performance can be usefully compared (though with caveats – see below – in mind) on each of the six indicators: *Voice and Accountability*, *Political Stability*, *Government Effectiveness*, *Regulatory Quality*, *Rule of law*, and *Control of corruption*.

There are clear limitations on the utility of these indicators as precise measures of governance within each country and on their direct comparability with others; but they nonetheless provide us with a generalised indication of the state-of-play within PICs and of progress or otherwise towards an ideal-type goal. Papua New Guinea, for example, does reasonably well on the *Voice and Accountability* indicator with a score of 50 per cent; though its scores for the other five indicators are close to the 25 percentile mark. Its scores on the *Corruption* control and the *Rule of Law* indicator are quite low and would appear to be regressing. Solomon Islands, having had a difficult decade marred by an as yet unresolved internal conflict, would appear to have regressed from a mid-way position on all the above indicators to a ranking of 25 per cent or less over the past decade – and especially so in relation to *Government Effectiveness*. Fiji has nose-dived on all six WGI indicators since the coup in 2006; whereas Vanuatu – with the exception of a low *Government Effectiveness* indicator – scores well into the third quartile on all other indicators. Tonga has mid-range third quartile performance scores across all indicators. The clear stand-out countries in terms of governance performance across all indicators are Samoa followed closely by the Cook Islands.

On the *Ease of Doing Business* index created by the World Bank as a guide to private sector conditions and the environment for foreign and national entrepreneurship (and which includes business start-up times, credit availability, taxation regimes and investment protection), of the 24 countries in the Asia-Pacific region many PICs score quite well. Tonga, Samoa, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Fiji are placed in the top ten, while Papua New Guinea comes in at 15th, followed by the smaller PIC states with Timor Leste in 24th place at the tail-end of the list. (Singapore is at the top of the Asia-Pacific list).

Pacific Island states – because of their small size and often distant location from the large centres of power and influence in international politics – are often regarded as belonging to the world's weak and fragile sets of states. Fragile states have long been regarded by policy-makers and security analysts in the 'developed' world as: vulnerable to overthrow, to political and economic instability, to 'capture' by unscrupulous neighbours, to be easily 'penetrated' by organised crime and seduced by the blandishments of international criminal organisations; easily led astray by carpet-baggers; more likely to fail because of weak institutions and inexperienced leadership; and therefore likely to be in need of support and 'rescue' by larger powers of the developed world!

The *Failed States Index* published by the ultra-conservative US *Foreign Policy* magazine ranks 60 states across the globe that have prospects of failing: the most likely to fail according to this list is Somalia at number one, and the least likely is Djibouti at number at 60. Only three Pacific states make the list: Timor Leste at number 23, Solomon Islands at number 48, and Papua New Guinea at number 54. Note that these ratings do not predict collapse, but rather attempt to measure vulnerability to collapse or conflict – that is, conflict of sufficient magnitude that would render those state institutions and those embryonic 'forces that bind' to become totally ineffective and/or dissipate.

Perhaps more pertinent to the situation of small Pacific Island states is an assessment of the 'Fragility of Small Island Developing States' produced by Carleton University in Canada's Country Indicators for Foreign Policy Project. It is not a predictive (i.e. of collapse) calculation but rather an index of fragility for small states that in certain severe circumstances may be more prone to collapse. Of the 37 states ranked in this index from 'Least Fragile' to 'Most Fragile', Samoa is ranked 9; FSM 10; Vanuatu 11; Fiji 16; Palau 20; Tonga 21; Papua New Guinea 30; Kiribati 31; Solomon Islands 33; and Timor Leste 35. (The SIDS least fragile small state is Barbados at number 1, while the most fragile is Guinea-Bissau at 37).

The United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Index* includes all PICs and its 2011 rankings show that all – with the exception of Palau and the Federated States of Micronesia – have risen steadily up the rankings over the last 30 years. Countries are ranked from number 1 (Norway) to number 187 (Congo) on a four-step scale of Human Development: Very High, High, Medium, and Low. None of the PICs feature in the top two rankings of 'Very High' or 'High'. Most PICs inhabit the Medium ranking (as per the table below), while Solomon Islands, Timor Leste and Papua New Guinea are ranked in the 'Low' category.

Table 1: UNDP Human Development Index Rankings 2011

1-47 Very High
(Norway #1 – Barbados #47)
48-94 High
(Uruguay #48 – Tunisia #94)
95-141 Medium
(Jordan #95 – Bhutan #141)
90 Tonga
99 Samoa
100 Fiji
(101 China 101)
116 FSM
122 Kiribati
125 Vanuatu
(134 India)
(135 Ghana)
142-187 Low
(Solomon Islands #142 - Congo #187)
142 Sol Islands
147 Timor Leste
153 Papua New Guinea

Note: Tonga has slipped from a HIGH ranking in 2004 to a MEDIUM ranking in 2011. SI, PNG and TL slipped from the bottom layer of MEDIUM in 2004 to the upper ranks of the LOW category in 2011 (thereby slipping below the Regional Asia-Pacific average).

The anti-corruption agency Transparency International's well-known 'Perception of Corruption Index' ranks the PICs in the following table:

Table 2: Transparency International Perception of Corruption Index 2011

New Zealand = (Rank #1)	
Samoa	69
Vanuatu	77
Kiribati	95
Tonga	95
Solomon Islands	120
Timor Leste	143
Papua New Guinea	154
(Somalia = Rank #182)	

Perhaps of the most utility to PIC governments in addressing their development issues and policies are the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A 2011 Asian Development Bank workshop on 'The Millennium Development Goals in Pacific Island Countries: Taking Stock, Emerging Issues and the Way Forward', reported that low growth rates, few employment opportunities and subsistence economies for most rural people makes it a difficult proposition for the Pacific region as a whole to make substantial progress in achieving the MDGs by the target date of 2015. Mixed progress has been made, however, across the Pacific Islands region. 'On track' towards achieving the goals are: Cook Islands, Niue, Palau, Samoa and Tonga. Making 'Mixed progress' towards achieving the MDGs are Fiji, Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. 'Off track' in achieving the MDGs are Kiribati, Nauru and Papua New Guinea. The Pacific region overall is on track to achieving the MDGs in the areas of access to primary education, gender equality in education, and reduction of infant and child mortality. Maternal health is a widespread problem though many countries are picking up their performance on that goal.

The GFC has made things more difficult for government expenditure on service delivery. But in the process of helping PIC governments pursue development targets the policy, planning and management effort involved by national bureaucracies has enhanced the effectiveness of national budgeting strategies, of development decision-making and of implementation strategies more generally. In other words the *governance* spin-off from attempting to attain these Goals has been important for PICs.

Themes and Issues

The chapters in this volume canvass political change and development across the Pacific Islands from a variety of perspectives, each contributing to the analysis of a region growing in complexity and in confidence. They fall neatly into three sections: Oceania and its Inheritance; Oceania – Current Needs and Challenges; and Oceania and its Wider Setting.

Oceania and its Inheritance

Political Institutions

Jon Fraenkel opens the volume with a survey of what he regards as the second phase of post independence politics and institutions in the South Pacific, noting – from the mid-1980s – an increasing complexity of domestic and regional issues and a persistent instability confronting leaders and their societies. Despite the hybridisation of political systems – the political engineering and experimentation with power-sharing, decentralisation, and electoral arrangements and the testing of constitutions all of which were intended to settle fractious polities – volatility, he suggests, is likely to persist well into the 21st century. He identifies key ‘gaps’ in political arrangements – including the absence of popularly-based parties, of women in politics, and, in Fiji’s case, of respect for constitutional democratic rule – all indicating that many Pacific countries have yet to reach their post-colonial ‘settlements’. Fraenkel book-ends this volume with a chapter discussing the relevance or otherwise of European models of government to Pacific Island states.

Fiji: Which Way?

Interpreting Fijian politics has not proven an easy task. Its polity – divided ethnically, communally and geographically – experienced democratic rule from the time of Fiji’s independence in 1970 until a coup in 1987 seemingly irretrievably altered the political landscape. A second coup followed later that year (again led by Rabuka) – then a brief return to civilian rule was punctuated in 2000 (by a George Speight led coup). Elections and a return to parliamentarism followed; but then in 2006 a further coup (led by Commodore Bainimarama) took place. Bainimarama has ‘promised’ a return to civilian rule by 2014. In his chapter in this volume Jone Baledrokadroka – a former senior officer in the Fiji military and an arch critic of Bainimarama – writes that Fiji entirely deserves the descriptor of a ‘coup-prone state’. In the communally bifurcated Fiji there has long been ambivalence towards democracy, and support for it by Fiji’s communities over the years has always been conditional.

Baledrokadroka offers an interpretation: in many ways the focus on 'professionalism' in the military and its experience in 'peacekeeping' over many years in the Middle East has led the hierarchy to believe it has a clear 'mandate' or 'obligation' to undertake a 'nation-building' role and to address what it sees as a severe weakness in civilian authority and an ineffectiveness in decision-making structures and patterns. But coup regimes – particularly the most recent – become self-serving. If military officers want political power they should resign their commissions and contest elections, he argues.

Hélène Goiran suggests that there is a degree of inevitability about coup d'états in Fiji because (a) managing a communally bifurcated society virtually requires the strong arm and discipline that a military force offers, and (b) the continuity of a warrior tradition – built from chiefly rule within the hierarchically ordered Fijian society and reinforced by battlefield and peacekeeping experience – affords a natural transposition into the political sphere by the military.

Samoa's Story

The Samoan political system, in quite stark contrast to that of Fiji and other PICs, has a police force but no military, holds democratic elections every five years, is built on underlying notions of 'Fa'a Samoa' – or Samoan ways – and has had for the past 30 years a government led by the same political party, the Human Rights Protection Party, which has strong links to leaders at the local level. It is, as former Samoan diplomat Afamasaga Toleafoa writes in Chapter 5, a one-party state with strong executive dominance and one that can be quite authoritarian in its attitude to dissenters and opposition. Toleafoa is concerned about the corruption and loss of integrity that longevity in office can bring. But by the same token Samoa enjoys an enviable reputation in the Pacific region and beyond for stability, improving living standards, and economic management.

Consensus Seeking in New Caledonia

In New Caledonia – after decades of bitter division (including inter-communal violence and bloodshed) and of fraught political and constitutional processes – there is now a positive search for consensus among the Kanak and Francophone peoples of this French Territory. Through power sharing and balancing arrangements, Jean-Eves Faberon suggests, New Caledonians will find over time an identity and common destiny. Faberon eloquently traces: the phases in the 'idea of decolonisation' from the 1950s and the formation of the Union Caledonien – the first anti-colonial political party; the conservative resistance to it as the nickel boom gripped New Caledonia through the 1970s and the substantial in-migration of metropolitan French citizens that followed; as well as the bloodshed that occurred in reaction to the formation and demands of the independentist FLNKS through the 1980s. He is taken by the 'genius' of

the Noumea Accord which settled on a gradualist and pluralist power-sharing approach to political change and to limited autonomy and which has helped install a 20-year period of peace and relative consensus. While guardedly optimistic about the future of New Caledonia's power-sharing arrangements, Faberon can offer no guarantee of long-term success.

Political 'Nomadism' in French Polynesia

A perspective on politics in French Polynesia by Sémir El Wardi suggests many similarities and differences in the political styles of the Pacific's island polities. The continuing relationship between colonised and coloniser is quite different from that prevailing in the 'Anglosphere' Pacific – France not having introduced 'Republican' values to its Pacific territories. But patronage style politics stemming from the cultural practice of gift-giving linking constituents to MPs are undoubtedly similar. The 'looting of public resources' of which Al Wardi writes echoes similar themes of 'raiding the state' in polities further west. These personalist and communitarian socio-political type linkages run counter to Weberian rational-legal conceptions of the public good and of 'responsible government'. Political 'nomadism' – floor-crossing and party-switching are familiar across the South Pacific – though less so in Samoa and Fiji. Politics at all levels, Al Wardi asserts, is a 'theatre of persistent conflict' – a point that also resonates well in western Melanesia – though perhaps much less so in the smaller island states of Micronesia.

Oceania: Current Needs and Challenges

Assessing Progress in Development

In assessing development across the South Pacific region one of the best guides—as we have seen above – is the progress or otherwise made towards the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals. Pacific Island governments use the MDGs to track and measure their performance particularly on social development progress. Linda Petersen – a long-time development analyst and practitioner in the Pacific – examines the record across the region noting that the target date of 2015 is still some way off and that the cumulative impact of development initiatives will take time to register/show-up in quantitative terms. The record so far is patchy. Progress on MDG 1 (Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger), for example, is not promising – a problem often being the widespread belief in many PICs that social networks, tradition and a strong subsistence base alone will ensure positive futures. For the MDGs relating to health (MDGs 4, 5 and 6) the performance is mixed with some gains in the health status of women and children and in control of communicable diseases. Unfortunately the prospect remains for these positive trends to be reversed. The clear message from the

mixed progress to date is that enhanced political and societal commitment will be required for the PICs to meet these social and development targets. Donor analysis – by AusAID in particular – has found that while some PICs have made good progress against and even achieved some MDG targets, the Pacific region as a whole ‘still appears to be seriously off track to achieve the MDGs by 2015.’

A Gender Lens

The need to integrate key gender dimensions into all development frameworks and strategies is argued by Treva Braun, a gender specialist and social planner with the South Pacific Community in Noumea. Braun argues for a reframing of the development discourse (and architecture) so that gender equality is considered as fundamental. The imperatives and implications of ‘development’ are often significantly different for men and women. A gender ‘lens’ is regrettably absent from definitions of security and development. Were such a ‘lens’ applied at ‘defining moments’ in the region’s history – as for example with the adoption of the Pacific Plan by the South Pacific Forum in 2005 – Pacific women’s concerns for stability and security as well as opportunities for eradicating gender inequality would have been significantly enhanced.

A gendered ‘lens’ on development also requires greater representation and participation of women within the decision-making apparatuses of Pacific governments. The small numbers of women occupying senior political positions across the Pacific states has been a matter of public record now for some time. The ‘list system’ of representation in the New Caledonian Assembly does ensure equal gender representation, but that is an exceptional case. Despite some national and donor effort on affirmative action programs for enhanced participation and representation by women over the past decade, the results so far have been disappointing. Excluding the French Pacific, women hold only 3 per cent of the seats in Pacific Parliaments – well below the world average of 18 per cent. Women’s representation in Pacific national politics has been estimated at only 50 per cent of that which pertains in the Arab states of the Middle East and North Africa!

But what of women in Pacific public services – hitherto a generally neglected area of research? Asenati Liki Chan Tung’s chapter highlights her research on women’s upward mobility into senior positions in the Samoan and Solomon Islands bureaucracies – pointing to strong senior bureaucratic representation by women in Samoa and some positive trends emerging at the upper levels in Solomon Islands. The chapter identifies the barriers to upward mobility for women and the attitudinal shifts necessary for further advancement to occur. It also shows a correlation between expanded educational opportunities for girls and an increase in public service participation by women at higher levels. Further research into the teaching, nursing and legal professions will shed light on the status of women in other Pacific agencies of government.

Youth

'YouthQuake' is the startling title of a Discussion Paper produced by the Pacific Institute of Public Policy in 2011. The paper argues that all PICs face serious demographic challenges and particularly so in Melanesia where populations are doubling every 30 years and urban populations are doubling every 17 years. Is this the likely catalyst for radical change? 'Will democracy be sunk by demography?' In this volume Rose Maebiru argues that with an overall population growth rate of 2.2 per cent per annum and the mean age of the Pacific Islands population at 21 years, creative thinking is indeed necessary within the PICs about socialisation, education, employment opportunities and lifestyles for the Pacific's youth. Research on Caribbean youth has shown, for example, that investing in young people – especially through the provision of and encouragement for education – can result in GDP increases of 2 per cent. The South Pacific Community's 'Pacific Youth Strategy 2010' provides some positive messages including a framework for youth development and the managing of generational change in the region. It is, however, an aspirational document that hopes to provide a strategy for youth 'to access integrated educational opportunities, nurture sustainable livelihoods, lead healthier lifestyles, build stronger communities, benefit from effective national and community mechanisms for addressing youth issues, and strengthen their cultural identities'.

Tourism

Tourism has long been regarded as a route to development in the Pacific because of the attractiveness of the South Sea Islands' natural tropical beauty, charm and way of life to tourists from metropolitan countries. Tourism has become vital to most PIC economies: the industry representing 25 per cent of GDP in both Fiji and Samoa; 50 per cent in Cook Islands and 67 per cent in Palau. One tourism pathway – a new niche that has opened relatively recently – is a 'customised' form of tourism focusing on 'authentic' settings and societies. 'Beach Fale' tourism in Samoa is one such example highlighted in Susana Taua'a's analysis of tourism issues in the region.

Rural Development

Agriculture – a most important route to rural and national development and one long neglected by donors and international aid agencies – though certainly not by Pacific farmers – has made a welcome return to the global assistance agenda. Matthew Allen helpfully traverses the changing phases in development theory – from modernisation through structuralism, to post-development and post-structuralist perspectives on rural production. He predicts that those who see hybrid and syncretic approaches and who can capture the localised conceptions of what is a fulfilling holistic approach to rural development will make the most useful contribution to rural political economy across the region.

Oceania and its Wider Setting

Security Tensions?

An overview of regional security issues by James Bunce concludes the regional studies. The security interests of most Pacific Island states align well with those of the region's 'traditional partners' – Australia, France and New Zealand. Australia and New Zealand military forces are engaged in peace building operations (Solomon Islands, Timor Leste), and France has a small continuing military presence in New Caledonia and French Polynesia. Internal security issues are regarded as low-level. The virtual disappearance of the Taiwan-Beijing tension of recent decades has given room for China to take its place as a 'responsible stakeholder' in regional development – and it seems intent (as it has in other parts of the developing world) in providing aid with no strings attached and investing in infrastructure and resource development via its various business enterprises (3,000 or more of which are said to be registered in the Pacific Islands).

Regionalism

Henry Ivarature, political adviser to the South Pacific Forum, reviews the various components of the regional architecture of the Forum aimed at strengthening regional cooperation and integration, that encourage regional dialogue and that seek to support and complement national PIC policies and ambitions. He admits to an apparent regional 'jig-saw puzzle' of institutions and frameworks. The Forum – and all those agencies that work to support the PICs' political and developmental efforts – falls well short of an integrated and authentic model of Pacific regionalism. But perhaps the vision is too big? He sees in the Pacific Plan an attempt to harmonise this regional effort under a jointly-owned 'umbrella'. Its efforts to date, however, have been more productive and credible on the 'political' side of the agenda than they are on the 'economic' side. The Forum is currently dented by political divisions resulting especially from Fiji's departure from constitutional rule and by those PICs which have chosen to support Fiji regardless of the composition and nature of its government. Some might argue though that the Melanesians are helping contain Fiji's wilful 'outriding' behaviour.

Instability *and* Stability: Muddling Through ... and Beyond

In assessing the changing 'pattern of islands' in the South Pacific over the decades since the Island states became independent, a key focus has been on the issue of

political stability and/or instability. In the history of new states instability has impacted adversely on the prospects for economic and social development and, if severe, leads to social and economic breakdown and the possibility of state failure. In the world of diplomatic and security analysis, it is also argued that in highly unstable situations, new states are liable to penetration or takeover by subversive influences – including criminal organisations or unfriendly states. But the analysis of instability is an imprecise science, both the causes and the outbreak of it being difficult to identify with any certainty. Factionalism is one key driver of instability – yet it is also a precursor to the consolidation of democratic processes and discourse!

Political Strife

A quick survey – from Timor Leste in the west to Tonga in the east – over the last decade shows a number of serious incidences of political strife. Timor has had a difficult transition to independence that included armed resistance to its Indonesian colonisers and then a violent internal conflict between opposing parties (including an assassination attempt on its then President in 2008). Irian Jaya – Indonesia’s eastern-most Province – has seen the suppression of a small independence movement over many years including intermittent outbreaks of violence. Papua New Guinea eventually placated an armed rebellion by the Bougainville Province through a form of decentralised political autonomy; but political contestation remains robust and tense, while crime and illegality remain a threat to public order. Solomon Islands experienced a ‘coup’ against the government by the Malaita Eagle Force in 2000 and although civilian rule was quickly restored and a regional assistance mission (RAMSI) in support of government remains in situ, the country has had an unsettled decade since that time (including riots in Honiara in 2006). Tonga experienced rioting and violent behaviour in 2006 though order was quickly restored. Fiji’s coup of 2006 represents the most serious disruption to democratic state authority across the region.

Yet the region is not in constant turmoil and there are many states that have not experienced strife and tumult and in which order – rather than disorder – has generally prevailed. Even those conflicted states referred to above have enjoyed periods of relative calm and (near) normalcy. Vanuatu, despite having had a troubled decolonisation period, has had numerous peaceful changes of government and has remained free of serious political strife since its independence. In fact Vanuatu was named the ‘happiest place on earth’ by a ‘Happy Planet Index’ in 2006. Samoa has had four decades or more of effective, trouble free government. The smaller states of Cook Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Nauru and the former American territories of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia have all been free of destabilising tension and political strife.

Muddling Through ... and Beyond

In surveying the changing ‘pattern of islands’ in the Pacific Island Countries over the past three decades or more, and insofar as one can generalise, perhaps the most useful descriptor of the ways in which PIC governments have managed their political transitions – including their economic development and governance agendas – is that of ‘muddling through’. In fact, not only is this concept useful as a descriptor of the PICs’ political management style – it could also perhaps be seen at times as close to a conscious strategy on the part of some PIC governments! And over the course of four decades or more of independence across the region, ‘muddling through’ has shown itself in many ways to be a positive approach – or at least a non-negative approach – to governing.

The term and its usage in political science and public administration derives from a classic article by Charles E Lindblom, ‘The Science of “Muddling Through”’, published in *Public Administration Review* in the late 1950s. Despite its American origins, it was a concept adapted and used regularly in the late colonial period and early years of independence in classes at the University of Papua New Guinea, administrative colleges and in government workshops to describe the style and processes of the Pacific’s transitions to Independence – especially so in Melanesia.

Transferring institutions of state and the building of coherent and regularised bureaucracies in the context of small-scale, multi-ethnic, fissiparous societies with complex inter-relationships and with no bureaucratic tradition to draw from, such as are to be found in Melanesia, was no small task. The processes involved in re-shaping colonial bureaucracies and in framing new policy approaches called not only for adaptation of the familiar but for innovation and the adoption of new directions and approaches in all Pacific countries. The periods of transition to independence and the first decades of that new political and constitutional status were – for Pacific governments of the day – times of adaptation and experimentation, of shifting responsibilities, of partial implementation and of crisis avoidance that often involved reversal of decisions taken earlier.

The Pacific’s early post-independence governments and bureaucracies were far from the organised, rational, change management and reform agencies prescribed – and idealised – by donors and international agencies. So ‘muddling through’ became the default management style and in many ways close to a conscious ‘strategy’ in many PICs. It was a tactic or method for resisting external ‘urgings’ to adopt ‘models’ and ‘innovations’ that were resented (locally) as an unwarranted intrusion on sovereignty or that were seen, realistically, to be unimplementable given the local PIC context and capacity. It was also often the

product of rational judgments made by politicians and bureaucrats about the pace of and capacity for change with knowledge about what would work in the given context and what would not work.

So ‘muddling through’ has been essentially a positive approach to governance. Perhaps had those forces of both change and inertia so evident in Pacific styles of operation /modus operandi been allowed to play out – there is nothing to suggest that Fiji, for example, would be in any worse socio-economic and political situation than it is currently. The new states of the Pacific have demonstrated considerable resilience, and in many cases, an extraordinary capacity to bounce back from difficulty and to maintain optimism for the future. The continuing professionalisation of public management across the region is building on that tradition. The growth of civil society organisations is also beginning to play a positive role in policy and implementation. Donors are becoming more coherent in their strategies, more attuned to the realities of generating development outcomes in small island states, and are beginning to acknowledge and map progress.

The chapters that follow explore these themes of governance, development and security that signal both continuity and change in the Pacific’s pattern of islands.

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