

9. Peacebuilding strengths and weaknesses

In this chapter, we move under a set of themes through the strengths and weaknesses entries in the final section of Table 8.1. The Solomons' was a conflict that could have become a major war, but was successfully contained. Unlike the story of Timor-Leste, in the next Peacebuilding Compared volume, where every village in the nation suffered death and devastation, the overwhelming majority of the Solomon Islands population stayed out of the conflict and concentrated on sustaining their village economies and taking care of the vulnerable members of their own villages. In spite of the fact that the country is very poor, disintegrated, poorly and corruptly governed and even though basics such as refugee and combatant reintegration were exceptionally poorly managed, Solomon Islands has experienced the loss of only one peacekeeper, in an ambush, and really no other armed conflict deaths since 2003. One reason for this has been RAMSI.

RAMSI: safe but sometimes aloof hands

A weakness of the RAMSI intervention was its poor timing. If Australia, New Zealand and other South Pacific countries were going to send peacekeepers in, it would have been more effective to do so when they were first asked, in 1998. This would have saved most of the loss of life that subsequently occurred and prevented the looting of institutions and the total collapse of the economy between 2000 and 2002.

A strength is that when RAMSI did arrive, it quickly re-established law and order. Violence fell immediately and weapons surrender was quick and successful by any international comparative standard. This success in re-establishing safety in conflict areas seems to be the key to why, in spite of various frequently voiced criticisms of RAMSI that we will consider, 90 per cent of Solomon Islanders in 2007 and 89 per cent in 2008 continued to support the presence of RAMSI (McMurray 2008:10; for a discussion of similar results of earlier surveys, see Anderson 2008:7). One worry is that confidence in RAMSI engendered dependency on RAMSI that has held back the rebuilding of confidence in Solomon Islands institutions. The real test of RAMSI's success should be less confidence in itself than confidence in the institutions it leaves behind.

Ninety per cent confidence is perhaps particularly surprising given that, unlike the peacekeepers in Bougainville, in the Solomons, 'some of the early RAMSI military personnel transgressed local cultural codes by involvement with prostitutes and local women' (Moore 2004:178). RAMSI personnel attracted much more criticism from locals than the Truce and Peace Monitoring Groups in Bougainville. Bougainville's peacekeepers were seen as much closer to the local community. The decision to locate most RAMSI staff in a segregated compound well out of town and most of the rest in white enclaves in prestigious suburbs did not help (compared with the situation in Bougainville, where most peacekeepers were spending most of their time in the villages). Out of and about town as well, locals saw too little of expatriates walking about with locals at the market and too much of them driving with other expatriates in airconditioned cars or sitting together in airconditioned restaurants (such as the Lime Lounge, with its almost exclusively white clientele, as in the extract from our fieldnotes below) (see also Allen 2006):

RAMSI from Australia are an embarrassment when they holiday in Gizo. Skinnydipping in front of the main street. Lewd behaviour with girls in the swimming pool. They stick together and do not mix with local people. They don't go around and introduce themselves to businesses. So how would they find out where homebrew is sold? They suffer from 'Lime Lounge Syndrome'. (Interview with Western Province businessman, 2006)

Fiscal strengthening and economic reform

Another great achievement of RAMSI from 2003 on was stemming the haemorrhaging of revenue into the pockets of militants and their business cronies. The rapid movement to fiscal balance after 2003 encouraged donors to return in a generous fashion—so generous that now donor dependency is a problem, with 60 per cent of the national budget coming from that quarter (Fukuyama 2008:27). Francis Fukuyama (2008) also sees credible commitment on long-term land leases as an obstacle to development. The problem, as he sees it, is that both investors and traditional landowners do not trust Solomon Islands institutions of land law. The Solomon Islands Government has continued to shy away from tackling the land issues at the heart of the conflict. It has established a Commission of Inquiry into Land Dealings in Guadalcanal and is consulting on a Tribal Land Disputes Resolution Panels Bill, but to date, one post-conflict government after another has found land reform too hard.

Poor-quality commercial institutions generally inhibit investment and deliver low returns to those who have invested; these include the cost of corruption

and political instability, unreliable and costly utilities, poor and expensive transportation, burdensome business procedures and uncertain rule of law, particularly insecure contract enforcement (IMF 2007:14). Beyond land law, Fukuyama sees *wantokism* as one of the things that holds back trust in and commitment to national institutions. As Brigg (2009) has countered, however, *wantokism*, wisely harnessed, can also be, and already is to some degree, a resource for trust building (see Chapter 7). Fukuyama regards national secondary schools for the best students from different ethnic groups as something that has worked in the past in Melanesia for forging a national identity among students who share an educational experience together that is oriented to future national leadership. This attracted much interest from Australia when advanced by the famous American scholar but not when advanced earlier by the National Peace Council (NPC 2004:Appendix 8): ‘Validate the role of boarding schools to bring children from different islands together to live together, work together and play together.’

An exacting challenge for a peace operation such as RAMSI, which aspires to great national change and a new national discipline, is its vulnerability to charges of hypocrisy. Roughan et al. (2006:2) charge it with demanding austerity while ‘practicing profligacy’ and remaining ‘opaque’ while preaching ‘transparency’. One might add that while urging de-politicisation of the criminal justice system, it used that system in a highly politicised fashion on many fronts (Averre 2008; Goldsmith and Dinnen 2007). Short peace operations such as in Bougainville keep the internationals out of murky waters that induce such resentment. This indeed was the diagnosis of a number of Bougainville old hands—that RAMSI was at risk of overstaying its welcome. Yet the survey data show that despite a formidable list of criticisms that range from the use of tear gas on 18 April 2006 to RAMSI military and police importing all their food from Australia instead of buying fresh fish and fruit from local markets, RAMSI is popular enough for citizens to want it to stay.

For all the problems, RAMSI made a wonderfully supportive contribution in helping an insolvent nation to solvency, in enabling it to move from a nation that could not pay its civil servants to one that could. Simple improvements to tax and customs administration and an in-line RAMSI accountant-general who immediately put a stop to the release of unauthorised expenditure for corrupt public officials were profoundly important contributions to restoring public services. These measures quickly ended a period in which there were no clear rules of the game of public spending.

Justice strengths and weaknesses

The criminal justice system has been both a strength and a weakness post-conflict. It would be hard to find another peace operation that has secured more convictions for conflict cases, and particularly such a high success rate among the most senior militants on both sides. While RAMSI was much slower to move against the most kleptocratic members of the elite, particularly Prime Minister Kemakeza, in the end it sent him, another former prime minister and half a dozen former cabinet members to prison. Corruption is being better exposed by a reinvigorated Office of the Auditor-General and a multidimensional anti-corruption policy that has a long way to go, but is making headway. The policy is still too timid and too bereft of investigators with the training to mount sting operations that result in bribe-paying foreign loggers losing their licences.

By any comparative standard of post-conflict justice, the Tension trials and the corruption trials were pretty fair.¹ After considering allegations of ethnic bias by RAMSI in-line justice officials, the Parliamentary Inquiry (2009:140) into RAMSI was not persuaded there was any such ethnic bias. On the debit side, there was inevitable selectivity that at times approached the determination of another coalition of the willing in Iraq to convict the 52 leaders who had their photos on those famous playing cards. Indeed, in 2009, RAMSI had a list of the top-10 fugitives that it still sought to capture. Former prime minister and Opposition Leader, Manasseh Sogavare, accused RAMSI of 'pursuing selective justice' in the Tension trials (Parliamentary Inquiry 2009:135). Convicted militants felt aggrieved at the lack of interest of the police in investigating earlier murders of close relatives of theirs. Some in Rove and Tetera prisons said they were political prisoners; some had a significant understanding of the laws of war and argued they had not breached them—it was not murder to kill an enemy soldier in battle. Great though the number of prosecutions was, most of the serious crimes of the conflict could not be pursued for want of resources. Militants were entitled to feel conned by the amnesty agreement at Townsville. The Solomon Islands Parliament was entitled to feel that its will in voting for the

1 We should not underestimate what an accomplishment this was. Judges were not allowed to sit on conflict cases involving their *wantoks*. A senior Malaitan judge explained that this was necessary because people like him thought militants such as Jimmy Rasta had saved Malaitans in Honiara: 'He was protecting property and life including myself...We appreciated what they did, the MEF. We provided them with food free...The police were doing nothing to protect us.' One might say that when this judge gives this as a reason why he could not sit on the trial of his *wantoks*, does it also mean he could not justly try IFM militants? Having sat in on one of this judge's trials and read transcripts of his cases, we think they were mostly fair and resulted in just convictions in these difficult post-conflict circumstances where no justice is perfect. We appreciated the openness with which both he as a judge and the prosecutors and defence (from the Office of the Public Solicitor) who appeared before him were willing to be open with us about the biases and conflicts that were inevitable in such a context, and that run through Solomon Islands society in a way one does not find in more legally homogenous settings where the 'rule of law' is well established.

amnesty was disrespected when ‘RAMSI did not consider whether to support any amnesty proposal but rather put its resources into trying to make sure that any such claims were defeated’ (Averre 2008:10).

In the trials of Harold Keke for murdering Father Geve and of militants for murdering Brother Sado, the court found police failed to accord defendants their full constitutional rights when they were arrested (Averre 2008:11). Australian lawyer, Gary Scott, publicly alleged blatant legal violations by Australian police that frustrated his defence of Jimmy Rasta Lusibaea (Marshall 2004). In the trial of MEF leader Alex Bartlett, a defence subpoena forced revelation of a written agreement between the Australian Federal Police-funded Solomon Islands Police Commissioner, Shane Castles, and two crucial witnesses whereby the witnesses received ‘significant financial and other assistance on the condition they kept the agreements secret and gave evidence in Court only in accordance with their police statements’ (Averre 2008:11; see also O’Connor 2007a).² Such unlawful behaviour in Australia would have had disastrous consequences for the career of a police commissioner.

The most crucial weakness of the justice system, as revealed in the work of the National Peace Council and the Parliamentary Inquiry into RAMSI (2009), has been the failure to enable and support conflict prevention by chiefs and churches at the village level. This was the form of justice that the People’s Surveys showed 90 per cent of citizens value most highly (see Chapter 4, Footnote 3).

Weaknesses of governance linkages

RAMSI has focused its governance capacity building very much on Honiara and national institutions based there. Yet Scales et al. (2002:7) argue that perhaps the more important weaknesses of governance are in the quality and clarity of linkages between village government—the level that matters most to most citizens—and more encompassing levels of government at the provincial and national levels. In a village society, strengthened national institutions that do not connect in an effective way to village governance have truncated traction. Provincial government capacity is even less than national governmental capacity—much less. Provincial government is remote from most villages and there is no system of local government. Only a few regions of the nation are linked together by councils of chiefs—an institution commonly used in other parts of Melanesia for linking villages into more encompassing governance systems.

² See, in addition, Chapter 5, Footnote 9 on the substantial payments made by the Australian Federal Police to family members of the alleged victim of sexual abuse by former Solomon Islands attorney-general Julian Moti. Justice Debbie Mullins of the Supreme Court of Queensland found them ‘an affront to the public conscience’ that called the integrity of the administration of justice into question—an interpretation later rejected by the Queensland Court of Appeal (*R v Moti* [2010] QCA 178).

Churches do perform this function to a degree, at least where denominational schisms are not deep. Church building predates colonial statebuilding by decades in the Solomons (Joseph and Browne Beu 2008:2). Though as Joseph and Browne Beu (2008:1) also point out, in some ways more recent civil society institutions—notably, the Solomon Islands Football Federation—have done more effective integrative institution building across the length and breadth of the nation than has the state.

Unlinking the power of shadow governments

We have seen that one governance linkage that has worked since the Mamaloni governments came to power is between Members of Parliament and a shadow government, or competing shadow governments,³ of business leaders with investments in logging, hotels, casinos, prostitution and fishing. The arrival of RAMSI saw a second shadow government of advisors operating alongside the electorally accountable government (Dinnen 2008a:68). The first shadow government is mostly ethnically Asian; the second mostly Caucasian.

As indigenous Solomon Islanders see the linkages of their village governance to national and provincial government languish, they sometimes lament the strong linkages they can see whereby shadow governments of foreigners at times make puppets of those they elect. That interpretation was important to understanding the sentiments manifest in the April 2006 riots and to understanding the ethos of resistance to foreign domination of the Sogavare government that came to power in its aftermath. A third, also ethnically Asian, foreign shadow network is constituted by Taiwanese funding, especially of the Rural Constituency Development Fund of S\$1 million per parliamentarian per annum to spend more or less as they wish. In addition, in 2006, Taiwan was alleged to have a 'secret slush fund', for 'influence peddling...worth well over \$10 million, provided by the back door to the Prime Minister's office' (Skelton 2006). Taiwan is seen as a more benign source of foreign cash by indigenous Solomon Islanders partly because it makes much fewer demands on what government policies should prevail than the other two types of shadow governments. The one policy demand that counts for Taiwan is hard edged, but matters little to the average Solomon Islander: continuing diplomatic recognition of Taiwan. Beyond that, Taiwan mostly exercises only soft power. Yet one prominent Chinese powerbroker in Solomon Islands posited the Taiwanese funding as the most important reason for the nation's poor economic prospects:

3 For example, in April 2006, one we have seen was ensconced at the Honiara Hotel supporting Syder Rini's candidature for the prime ministership with backers organised by Sir Thomas Chan. And a competing shadow government in waiting was camped with their Asian business sponsors at the Iron Bottom Sound Hotel.

It prevents Solomon Island politics from maturing and learning to stand on its own feet. Getting elected to Parliament is like winning a \$1 million Taiwanese lottery ticket. It's the only way to milk the cow. It's different from Australia where you can have wealthy men like Kevin Rudd and Malcolm Turnbull contesting politics.⁴

But largesse from all the shadow governments of foreigners interacts with first-past-the-post electoral politics and *wantokism* in a way that effectively disenfranchises most citizens—just as it empowers foreign shadows. The foreign shadows provide the largesse to politicians; the favoured politicians use it to reward those who vote for them (mostly *wantoks*). First past the post with many candidates, each with narrow ethnic power bases, means candidates have only to pay off a small proportion of the electorate to win. The rest of the electorate gets little back from the government. So you get government of the few, by the few, for the few foreign shadows.

In this section and throughout the book, we have described the workings of three types of shadow states⁵ of foreigners as described in our interviews: first, RAMSI as a neo-colonial shadow government; second, competing factions of predominantly Asian, predominantly logging, business interests that pool funds to bankroll ballots for the prime ministership and votes of no confidence in incumbent prime ministers; and third, the generous development funding Taiwan puts directly into the hands of MPs. A fourth type of shadow state rather closer to William Reno's (1995) original formulation of the concept in Sierra Leone existed between the 2000 coup and the arrival of RAMSI. In this period, the unelected shadows were powerbrokers of the MEF, such as Andrew Nori and Jimmy Rasta. The idea of the shadow state (Reno 1998, 2000) is not that elected governments are puppets of their shadows. Those with formal state power use those with shadow economy and warlord power, just as the latter use the politicians to deliver their specific interests. In the application of the idea of a shadow government (of towns and provinces) by Van Klinken (2007; see also Braithwaite et al. 2010a) to explain the onset of armed conflict in certain provinces of Indonesia, the most common form of payoff sought by members of the shadow government was government contracts. This has been much less important to the shadow governments we have described in the Solomons compared with favourable treatment for logging, fishing, land and casino deals, extravagant and unaccountable compensation and diplomatic leverage.

4 He then went on to lament why a comparatively wealthy Solomon Islander, former Central Bank governor Rick Hou, who in his view would make the most talented prime minister for the nation, would never be motivated to play the money politics involved in being prime minister. During the conflict, Hou was threatened at the point of a gun by militants demanding money. A year later, in 2010, he was in fact elected to the Parliament but not to the ministry.

5 In Reno's (1995, 2000) formulation, the shadow state is distinguished from the formal state conceived in conventional Weberian terms as: 1) secure in a monopoly over the legitimate use of force; 2) an administrative order regulated by law; and 3) sovereign in authority within a set of geographical borders.

Sinclair Dinnen, in commenting on an earlier draft of this section, queried whether we had so many shadow governments in play here and so many differences from William Reno's shadow states in Africa that we must question the analytical value of the concept for the Solomons. It could indeed be that as Peacebuilding Compared progresses we find that it is more analytically strategic to deploy the more generic framework of networked governance (Bevir and Rhodes 2003; Castells 1996; Rhodes 1997) that does not connote any particular form of exchange between politicians and network partners. Networked governance also does not necessarily impute anything dark or shadowy about networking between politicians and others. Networked governance analysis allows a dissection of specific forms of linkages—some normatively healthy, some unhealthy. We have introduced another reason for pondering whether networked governance might have been a more productive frame than the shadow government frame we have infused into our analysis at times. This is that the absence of certain types of linkage is a problem of peacebuilding in the Solomons—most importantly, linkages between village governance and more encompassing levels of government. On the other hand, all four of the types of shadow government we posit in this section do have their sinister side. Between them they have 'sucked out' (Ignatieff 2003:162) and corrupted much indigenous capacity, making the capacity that is available rather more at the service of powerful foreign and criminal interests than at the service of powerless villagers and the institutions that should sustain them.

William Reno's conceptualisation of a shadow state connects to a much older literature in economics on the shadow economy. The Solomons certainly became one of those societies in which very little of the economy, including the big international trade items of logs and fish, was recorded in the formal economy of the national accounts and taxed. Key aspects of Reno's shadow state certainly apply to the past two decades of Solomons history. These are the ideas of a shadow state as something 'constructed behind the façade of laws and government institutions' that establishes 'a form of personal rule' (Reno 2000:434). People such as prime ministers Mamaloni, Kenilorea and Rini, MEF leaders such as Jimmy Rasta and Andrew Nori and a cast of envelope-stuffing Asian business leaders all bear considerable similarities to the practitioners of the shadow state, as a form of personal rule, which Reno found in parts of Africa. As in such African states, the Solomons has seen clandestine circuits, particularly linked to a shadow economy of logging, systematically corrupt the Public Service and institutions for its accountability. As in Africa, in the Solomons, accountability institutions, such as the Public Service Commission, the Auditor-General's office, the Ombudsman and the Leadership Code Commission, were progressively dismantled and de-fanged because they were potential obstacles to personal rule and to the ability of rulers to capture rents.

RAMSI is a 'shadow government' that reverses this latter feature; it has been dedicated to strengthening these very institutions, even if it did in practice sometimes 'suck out' Solomons civil service capacity.⁶ It shadowed the commanding heights of the state with foreign advisors in a manner more like the influence of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in Africa. Taiwan's influence has different points of commonality and difference again. One could say that Taiwanese aid has been directed to strengthening the hands of patrimonial personal rule (against the rule of institutions), in this respect more consistently with the shadow state analysis. The clandestine circuits that link Taiwanese diplomats to Solomons political leaders fit the idea of a shadow state operating as personal rule by a mix of state and non-state actors operating behind the façade of a formal state structure.

All of the shadow governments we discuss here are *in part* 'clandestine circuits' wielding power behind a 'façade of formal sovereignty' (Reno 2000:437). Reno (2000:442) speaks of 'the existence of a Shadow State [as]...a matter of degree, rather than an all-or-nothing proposition'. On this continuum, the Solomons of the 1990s could have been closer to what Le Billon (2000:785) has described as the shadow state of the 'commodification of Cambodian forests' than to 1990s Sierra Leone.⁷ Reno (2002) has discussed the similarities between what some describe as the shadow state controls of the Russian *mafia* of the 1990s and shadow states in Africa. Reno sees the critical difference as being that the

6 John Wood commented here that in respect of these three accountability institutions, there indeed seems to be more evidence of sucking in of Solomons civil service capacity by RAMSI than sucking out. The Auditor-General's office, for example, has been transformed from an office of three people who did almost nothing, failing to complete an audit in 20 years, to 'an office of 30 local Solomon Islanders and a small number of RAMSI personnel who regularly make reports to Parliament' (Parliamentary Inquiry 2009:155).

7 In some senses, Cambodia and Solomon Islands are both cases where an 'abundance of shadows' (J. Ferguson 2006:15) apply, wherein rulers borrow "'the shadow, not the substance" of a Western capitalist economy'. Cambodia is an interesting case in that international pressure for 'good governance' resulted in a 'legalizing [of] shadow state politics' in the aftermath of a period in which the following logic expressed by a prime ministerial aide had kept economic activity in the shadows: 'To provide revenues to the Public Treasury is not the norm. Now, we make a lot of money. If we inject this money in the Ministry of Finance what will be the use? And who will benefit from this money? We don't know! If I do not steal this money, somebody else will do it and will kill me with the weapons bought with it' (interview with senior official conducted by Le Billon 2000:799). In the post-conflict period after this, '[t]he "shadow state" is thus a domestic response to the political challenges and opportunities posed by multi-party democratic governance and the neo-liberal perspective of "government by the market", in which "the market is viewed not merely as a means of allocating goods and services but as a form of social regulation" (Graf 1995:141). Rather than opposing such a dominant paradigm, state actors seek to co-opt it, thereby benefiting from its financial opportunities, including access to aid, while simultaneously reshaping it into an instrument of power' (Le Billon 2000:799). 'Good governance' influences delivered a biased legal framework in Cambodia that gave exclusive rights of forest exploitation to a favoured few. This was an effect not totally dissimilar to the insipid impact of RAMSI on forest exploitation. The co-prime ministers of Cambodia were able to mimic a green, democratic, accountable discourse of transition 'while integrating forests into their own power bases' (Le Billon 2000:802). 'Under "anarchy", marginalized segments of society were able to manoeuvre to gain some access to forest resources and to integrate themselves into the growing monetised economy, thereby counterbalancing somewhat unequal power relationships. Under "order", this room for manoeuvre gave way to an *exclusionary* form of capitalism, embodied in the take-over of forest access rights by large transnational companies' (Le Billon 2000:802).

Russian state was quite capable of controlling the Russian *mafya*, including through the use of force, whereas it was beyond the capacity of many weak African states to control the warlords who were the key figures in their shadow states (just as it was impossible for Solomons prime ministers between 2000 and 2003 to control the MEF or Harold Keke).

Comparative projects such as Peacebuilding Compared that progressively add cases over a long period of research might do best to remain open minded about the similarities and differences of accumulating cases to extant conceptualisations in the literature. This is the way we feel about the shadow state concept as we have deployed it in this case and our Indonesian cases (Braithwaite et al. 2010a). There are ways in which it fits quite evocatively with the Solomons experience, especially when we leave ourselves open to the idea of competition among a variety of different kinds of shadow states. Other cases invoke even more variety in 'shadow networks' (Duffield 2002), as in our Bougainville case study, which could be conceived as one in which the 'shadow armies' of private security forces (Sandline) backed by shadowy international mining interests were in play, and were decidedly shadowy players (J. Ferguson 2006:15). The 'shadow' metaphor is not only about darkness, deviousness and non-transparency; it is also about a parallel economy, parallel government or parallel military that sticks with the formal economy/government/military like a shadow sticks to a person. But governance in the Solomons is also importantly shaped by civil society networks that are not at all clandestine and not very corrupt. Pre-eminently, we are thinking of the church here. So we do wonder whether there might be more comparative purchase in diagnosing networks of governance, some of which hide in shadows, others that do not; some of which are a form of state/economy parallel to the formal ones, others that are simply on a different plane (a 'higher' one in the case of the church!). Just as individuals simultaneously identify with different layers of identity (Chapter 7), so they can move among multiple overlapping and fluid networks.

Reasserting control by Solomons institutions over foreign interests in a shadow economy

It could be argued that the Solomons is a case study of how the World Bank good governance agenda of statebuilding and its predecessor, the neo-liberal, small government agenda, have fared equally badly (Carroll and Hameiri 2007). An alternative analysis is that the institutional change most needed is a dismantling of the shadow state(s), at least where it involves payment of foreign cash to advance commercial or foreign diplomatic interests rather than national interests. Second, the institution building most needed is not top-down from

Honiara, but strengthening linkages bottom-up from village governance. It is not police cars in Honiara, but village constables on foot in remote areas where logging tensions bubble up. Many Solomon Islanders focus on corruption and shadow governments as the key challenges, rather than statebuilding, when they commonly say: 'It's not the car we need to change, it's the driver.'

The Centre for Independent Studies (Sodhi 2008:5) was unfortunate enough to release a paper just before the global financial crisis in which it drew lessons from Iceland—a country no more endowed with natural resources than the Solomons, but blessed with institutions that had delivered it prosperity. By the end of that year, the list of nations that were dramatically less solvent than Solomon Islands was a short one, but it included Iceland. Fishing, logging and tourism present the most important, sustainable economic futures for Solomon Islands. They would actually develop better if they were more uncoupled from foreign control (if foreign shadow governments could be put back in their boxes) and better linked to the local governance of the nation's 900 islands. Before the Tension, fishing was better supported for local economic development by dispersed fish-collection centres with refrigeration (Aqorau 2001). These were looted or destroyed by young men during the period of chaos. In the case of logging, Greenpeace (2008) and the Solomon Islands Development Trust have long made the case for progressive elimination of logging licences for foreign investors in favour of community eco-forestry linked to international markets. With fishing, the most strategic thinkers in the Solomon Islands Government favour the elimination of all licences for foreign fishing fleets in favour of developing indigenous capacity, where necessary in partnership with foreign technology and skill transfer.⁸ In tourism, the need is to connect the already strong skill sets of the Honiara and Gizo hotel and hospitality industries to village hospitality development, and inter-island transport to tourist paradises on culturally enriching and environmentally pristine remote islands.

This is not to say that there are not also important areas such as minerals exploration (for example, nickel on Isabel Island) in which direct foreign investment that is collaboratively linked to village governance around mine sites is the best development model. It is just to say that the sites where uncoupling from foreign economic development agenda setting is needed are more important sites than those where more foreign involvement would be a benefit. Where foreign help is most needed is with education investment to help Solomon Islanders become more sophisticated in choosing economic development options with bottom-up and top-down linkages that actually deliver development benefits to

⁸ Sustainable fishing is becoming more possible for Pacific countries because of increasingly effective cooperation through the Tuna Commission since 2004 and compliance becoming easier to monitor because of international cooperation in monitoring, NGO participation, satellite monitoring and paper trails for tracing the catch that make it hard to sell fish in Europe and Japan without documentation of where the fish was caught and processed. The effect is that a catch unsupported by a paper trail attracts a lower price.

the country's citizens. Australia's aid program since 2003 has been spending 15 times as much on law and justice as on education (AusAID 2007:2). New Zealand has been concentrating its assistance much more on education. The education budget remains badly skewed towards funding for the children of the elite to participate in higher education. There has been a great deal of fraud in this program, with students continuing to receive scholarship payments for years after they have dropped out of their course, for example.

Where the Centre for Independent Studies' analysis (Sodhi 2008) seems right is that too much of the aid to Solomon Islands is 'boomerang funding' into the pockets of Australian consultants and companies⁹ and that in spite of higher levels of foreign aid support than can be found almost anywhere in the world (67 per cent of GDP in 2005) (Anderson 2008:13), Solomon Islanders in the past decade have been considerably worse off economically than they were in the 1970s, with still only a small minority having access to electricity and telephony. For the moment, they are much better off in health, particularly with respect to malaria, thanks to foreign assistance, though globalisation could ultimately reverse its health benefits through HIV/AIDS.

Resilient civil society that can heal itself

One element in common between Solomon Islands and Bougainville is that Moore (2007:171) concludes that there were attempts to mediate the peace through 'more than twenty-five peace negotiations and forums'. As in Bougainville, in the Solomon Islands, there were many more failed peace talks than successful ones. A peacebuilding strength of Solomon Islands civil society was to have the resilience to push on from failed talks, using the tiny accomplishments that had been secured at the early talks as a slight foundation on which to build ultimate agreement for quite a successful disarmament process.

Even though RAMSI has not empowered civil society as strongly as it might have and although the Solomons' state institutions are top-down in ways that fail to foster bottom-up linkages, Solomon Islands civil society has proven resilient. Most of the reconciliation work that has mattered has been local in civil society, led by chiefs, women, churches and militants from inside their prison cells. The Solomon Islands Development Trust and the Solomon Islands Christian

⁹ Sixty-two per cent of total Australian assistance to Solomon Islands in 2006–07 was spent on expert technical assistance compared with an OECD average of 24 per cent (Hayward-Jones (2008a:5). One extreme example of profligacy was a peak of 53 expatriate staff in corrections that continued through 2006. Even on the night shift, when prisoners were locked down, high-priced expatriates were being paid to sit in Rove prison. As one of the Australian corrections staff said, 'I can't imagine what they do all night' to earn the higher salaries they are paid compared with locals. By mid-2009, the number had more than halved to about 20, but still one would have thought this an expensive and peculiar aid priority.

Association have been particularly strong indigenous NGOs with a bottom-up philosophy. This philosophy has also captured the imagination of many of the international NGOs, who have been large investors in Solomons civil society. Oxfam is one such NGO; a good example of the indigenous organisations it supported is Kastom Garden. Kastom Garden works with unemployed rural youth to reconnect them to productive garden-based work. Not all disenchanted youth who are being destroyed by *kwaso* (homebrew) are open to reconnection to their land and culture in this way, but for those who are it provides a path back to agricultural economic development. Kastom Garden also helps rural communities diversify the output from their gardens, improves their gardening techniques and provides more productive seed varieties and strains resistant to common crop diseases.

Unfettered media

Table 8.1 lists a media comparatively not dominated by the government as a strength in comparative terms, even though it faced repeated threats and demands for compensation from thugs operating at the behest of powerful interests and has practised self-censorship of reporting high-level corruption. Some would say the media elites are part of Malaitan elite networks. We, however, saw nothing like the fragmentation of the media into separate Muslim and Christian media that occurred in Ambon, for example (Braithwaite et al. 2010a:Chapter 3). The news pages, editorials and letters columns of the *Solomon Star* newspaper are engaging and diverse in opinion. The Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation has some outstanding programming, some of it replete with florid criticisms of the government and RAMSI alike. Public interest activists such as John Roughan of the Solomon Islands Development Trust and his son, Paul Roughan, when he led Transparency Solomon Islands, were never really muzzled for the want of a media outlet for their critiques. Special mention must be made of the world-class contribution of Mary-Louise O'Callaghan in getting the Solomons' story into the international media via her columns in *The Australian*.

The compensation roadblock to truth and reconciliation

A distinctive perversity of peacebuilding in Solomon Islands is that perpetrators have little interest in apologising for their violence. Instead, they managed a backstage identity as combatants and a front-stage identity as victims, so as to maximise large compensation payments from the government. Successive governments have served the nation poorly by paying them.

While we have seen that compensation has deep historical roots in Solomon Islands societies, a government compensation culture has evolved as a shallow and quick fix for teetering governments focused on surviving the next vote of no confidence. We have seen that this government compensation culture increases long-run risks of violence (Chand 2002). It becomes possible for leaders of both sides to win (and taxpayers to lose) when both sides ignite violence confident of a state payout to desist. The scam is even better for leaders when they skim payouts intended for combatants and refugees into their own pockets, as happened on both sides in the Solomons. Once that kind of iterated gaming of state compensation has set in, the best way to turn winners into losers is to convict them in criminal courts. Hence, in the context of the distinctive Solomons history of government compensation to major criminals, RAMSI's robust law enforcement was needed.

A challenge for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is to tell the truth of the damage that the government compensation culture has done and to convince the society that government compensation has encouraged violence more than ended it. A good starting decision has been legislation that precludes the commission from getting involved in compensation. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission will be worthwhile if it achieves nothing more than persuading the nation that government compensation for horizontal disputes must end, and has ended. Courts are the places where such compensation can be pursued against perpetrators. That of course does not preclude suits against the government where the government is the perpetrator. Reintegration support for refugees and rank-and-file fighters who hand in their guns is best funded directly to them by international donors, precisely so such funds cannot be extorted from governments—and so they cannot be embezzled by ministers and provincial premiers for that matter! Even international donors that fund reintegration payments to ex-combatants must make clear that they are one-off donors who cannot be gamed repeatedly with compensation demands.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission needs to reconnect citizens to thinking about reconciliation as something people do between one another, and communities do with each other. Competition for state compensation crushes reconciliation as something that can build peace by touching people's hearts. Solomon Islanders already understand this. They just need to see new institutions of reconciliation working well in a new spirit of national healing, forgiveness and rebuilding for the next generation. The reason why the Sycamore Tree restorative justice program discussed in Chapter 6 has had success in bringing combatants together is that the combatants in a sense own the program. Because the state has nothing to do with it, compensation bids to the state do not crowd out the genuine interpersonal and inter-group work of reconciliation.

In the end, crime did not pay

As in most of the conflicts we have so far considered in *Peacebuilding Compared*, in the Solomons, the most important leaders who started the conflict fared poorly out of it. Harold Keke, tortured by mental illness, serving several life sentences in Rove prison, is the most dramatic instance. He has little freedom of movement even about the prison during his long confinement and is severely disturbed. Part of this problem could be a bullet that struck his brain. But many lesser militant leaders were either killed or ended up in prison. Some of the political masterminds of the conflict have not gone to prison, but their influence and reputations ended up in tatters. Guadalcanal Premier Alebua rapidly lost political support during 2001 and the former prime minister would never be a major force in Solomons politics again. In June 2001, he was lucky to survive gunshot wounds to the eye, chest and arm after an attempt by disgruntled militants from his own side to assassinate him. Later in the decade, he had to take his wounded body into prison.

Andrew Nori's law firm was allegedly paid S\$517 549 in 'legal fees' by the government for his negotiations on behalf of the MEF/Joint Operation. Once this became public, he was deeply discredited, particularly in the eyes of MEF combatants who felt they received so little for their sacrifices in defending their people. One MEF member burnt down Nori's law offices in protest, was captured by the police and died after attacks on him in the police cells. In February 2001, the Registrar of the High Court initially refused to renew Nori's practising certificate—a decision Nori eventually had overturned. Nori has so far been clever enough to avoid any legal sanction for his central role in an alleged coup. But Nori told John Braithwaite that his reputation had been damaged 'irreparably' and that some things he had done in representing MEF demands to the government had been 'a personal and professional mistake' for which he was sorry. Another informant said that there had been a suicide in Nori's family as a result of his travails. As far as the police leaders of the Joint Operation were concerned, their police careers have ended and so have those of hundreds of police who worked for them. Dozens of former officers up to deputy commissioner level did prison time over the coup. Jimmy Rasta and his wife gave years of their lives to Rove prison and he faces another attempted murder trial starting in November 2010, notwithstanding his landslide election victory. The hopeful thing is that they continue to give to the prison's reconciliation work today, and to released combatants whom they employ in their business.