

The Economy of Papua New Guinea: 1996 Report

Economic Insights Pty Ltd, Australian Agency for International Development, International Development Issues, No. 46, Canberra, 1996, ISBN 0 642 22020 4 and ISBN 0818-4815

The Economy of Papua New Guinea is presented in two parts. The first part, written by Tim King and Craig Sugden of Economic Insights comprises of a summary, six chapters and Appendix A—the latter contains some very useful time series data on Papua New Guinea's socio-economic indicators. The second part, written by Alan Cook of Keiraville Consultants, consists of four appendices dealing with various aspects of the mining and petroleum industry in Papua New Guinea.

The book is well written and gives one of the best and most concise expositions of constraints to Papua New Guinea's development that I have seen (pp6-7). But the book's greatest utility may lie in its analysis of current and proposed structural and public sector reforms, some of which have been tried before, some of which have been on the books for some time, and some of which are being ushered in in the context of provincial government reforms. In addition there are discussions of macroeconomic policy which are also very useful because, as the book points out, though macroeconomic stability (as Papua New Guinea's past experience suggests) is not a sufficient condition for growth and development, it is nevertheless a necessary condition. Papua New Guinea has been particularly adept at introducing macroeconomic stability following international and internal shocks. But such stability has often been achieved through substantially reduced public sector investment and maintenance

outlays and without the introduction of necessary structural adjustment measures. This is not from the lack of information about what such measures are.

A number of structural adjustment measures were a part of the Papua New Guinea policy in the aftermath of Bougainville crisis and the 1989 sharp fall in agricultural commodity prices. But these were not introduced and in a number of cases policy moved in the opposite direction (p39), except with regard to wages policy—the 1992 Minimum Wage Determination significantly reduced urban minimum wages and introduced some flexibility into the labour market.

Similar structural adjustment measures in the aftermath of the 1994 foreign exchange crisis are again a part of the policy agenda. Reform to date has been slow and in some cases, such as tariff policy, it has moved towards greater preferential treatment for some industries at the expense of others and the tax base has narrowed rather than widened. There is a proposal to introduce a value-added tax from early 1998, but there is little preparatory work to show that it can be introduced then. Moreover, sales tax is currently a provincial government tax and the national government will have difficulty in persuading provinces to give up this important source of revenue. There has been strong and successful opposition from Papua New Guinea businesses to attempts to remove and reduce reserve activities for Papua New Guinea nationals. There has been some success in reducing public service numbers; though past experience suggests that, as the crisis recedes, the numbers will go up again. Moreover after the 1997 elections, there will be pressures to expand the numbers at the provincial and district levels—the cuts have also

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been the sharpest at this level during the current period of macroeconomic stabilisation.

The provincial government reforms have introduced added complexities and will increase demand for scarce accounting and auditing skills. The bedding down of these reforms and their effectiveness in improving conditions at the village and district level will be a long, drawn-out process and it is uncertain if it will work. Funding, staffing and infrastructure constraints pose major challenges for such reforms. On the positive side the new formulas under the reforms have led to a more equitable distribution of funds between the provinces, while also taking into account an element of cost disabilities for some provinces.

An objective of the government has been to increase the size of the public investment program. Ambitious targets for 1995 and 1996, after the sharp fall in 1994, have been difficult to meet. This is not surprising, given that debt-servicing costs have escalated, and an increase in the public investment program requires very sharp cuts in the public service wage bill. As the authors explain, such cuts have been found to be difficult to implement in any legal jurisdiction and it is unlikely that Papua New Guinea will succeed. Considerable wage increases in money terms have occurred for expatriates and to some extent nationals in 1996. Another complication is the shift in Australian aid from budgetary to program/project aid and how this shift can be integrated into Papua New Guinea's public investment program and the government's objective of transferring resources to the district and village level. The newly set-up National Planning Office does not have the capacity to coordinate and monitor planning at the provincial level and the

provinces lack capacity to monitor them at the village and district level.

Due to the timing of publication, the authors were not able to analyse the fact that, in 1996, no net funds were transferred to the provinces, villages and provinces; additional funds transferred in 1996 were not even adequate to pay for the added functions made the responsibility of the provinces. This, in the context of the severe squeeze which was imposed in 1994 and 1995 on the provinces, meant that a number of provinces were having difficulty meeting these responsibilities. Nevertheless the 1995 Organic Law requires added funds to be transferred to the provinces, districts and villages which will impose a severe financial squeeze on the national departments, especially as the budgetary flows from Australian aid are being rapidly wound down. It is not clear how they will cope, but they have to re-think their role. It appears that they have not done much thinking about this to date. In addition (and the book is unfortunately silent on this) the accounting and auditing demands of the 1995 Organic Law are too onerous and cannot be met. In fact a number of provinces did not meet the less demanding requirements of the 1977 Organic Law. Compliance requirements should be tailored to the capacity of the country to meet them; Papua New Guinea has in place developed-country standards of compliance, which even developed countries have difficulty in meeting.

An interesting question which the authors do not raise is, will the village and local level governments mobilise resources through head tax and other charges at that level to improve the delivery of services, now that responsibility for such taxes has shifted to these levels? Without such mobilisation, the expansion of delivery of services to districts and villages will remain slow.

The authors rightly point out that serious issues of governance and capacity to deliver services remain untackled in Papua New Guinea and that privatisation has been slow—nevertheless the partial sale of Papua New Guinea's Mineral Resources Development Corporation went well. On the positive side, Papua New Guinea has introduced a more flexible exchange rate system, which with a somewhat more flexible labour market and wages policy could improve Papua New Guinea's competitiveness. Against this, product markets have assumed greater rigidity and difficulties in accessing land and in most areas lack of availability of infrastructure reduce the value of such improved competitiveness. As the authors recommend, the Central Bank should ensure that the real exchange rate remains competitive. Papua New Guinea also has large mining and petroleum resources. The important policy implication from the past is that such resources should be used to improve the capacity of the non-mining sectors and not to undermine their competitiveness through upward pressure on the real exchange rate.

The book is a first-rate discussion of current policy issues and reforms and it is a must-read for policymakers in Papua New Guinea and others interested in Papua New Guinea.

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Resources, Nations and Indigenous Peoples; Case Studies from Australasia, Melanesia and Southeast Asia

Richard Howitt with John Connell and Philip Hirsch (eds), 1996. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, xi, 321pp, ISBN 0195537580

This is a superb collection of essays offering a cross-national account of relationships between indigenous peoples and the dominant State—particularly central is the question of sovereignty over natural resources. The volume draws together a range of case studies in both developing and developed countries (so called): many of the same questions facing peoples in developing countries are remarkably similar to the problems experienced by indigenous peoples in Australia. For example, under western style regimes, many of the societies that are suffering the economic and social impact of post colonialism are themselves 'developing' and, in the process, and in the name of the State, attempting to address the irreparable damage of the colonial past.

The introductory chapter develops a useful international framework which the editors use to question key international ideals that, in principle, permeate the international fabric of the United Nations and member countries in relation to the world's indigenous population. On a country-by-country basis, the political ethics of individual United Nation member countries often conflict with their ethics as part of that institution's international community—a phenomenon referred to by political 'realists' as *realpolitik*—what some believe to be the reality of sovereign nationhood. As the editors point out, in maintaining their place within the international community,

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states assert their sovereignty by securing their economic and political authority to the 'national interest'.

Of course, when we begin to explore the position of indigenous peoples in individual countries, the extent to which the concept of 'rights' can be defined in any collective way becomes highly questionable. In many instances, the countries which appear to breach international conventions regarding indigenous rights are often the survivors of European colonialism—emerging scathed and deprived of their rights. This is a recurring theme throughout the history of indigenous and non-indigenous conflict over control of resources and it forms the basis for most chapters in this volume. On the Thai–Burmese border, for example, artificial jurisdictions created by colonisation were imposed over the top of the Karen—the conflict over forests emerged as a result of that (Chapter 2). Overall, the legal position of indigenous peoples in Australia receives greater attention than the peoples of other countries but, generally speaking, this forms a useful backdrop for establishing the significance of the political, economic, cultural and social elements in the relationship between resource 'development' and indigenous peoples' rights. Obviously the extent to which peoples expectations have been, or are, met can only be evaluated on a country by country basis but there are certain underlying principles which are associated with the globalisation of indigenous rights. For example, Chapter 3, by Poynton, puts the rights of indigenous peoples, particularly the principles of self-determination, into context with International law—beginning with the United Nations, Poynton's chapter concentrates on post-Mabo Australia and helps to demystify

the role of the judiciary in shaping the legal/constitutional frameworks that are supposed to support justice between governments and indigenous peoples. Against this background, Christie and Perrett argue that language, country, values and beliefs are intrinsic to each individual cultural setting—these are fundamental for reconciling vastly different social values and for achieving control over territory. Similar problems face peoples of the Solomon Islands. Successful traditional resource management depends on the effective establishment of a process for people to exercise customary rights over their fishing grounds (Hviding and Baines, Chapter 5)—this is an issue that, at one level, has provoked international conflict between countries vying for fishing rights over the years while, at a cultural level, it raises highly complex questions of gender, age and 'ownership'.

Culture and gender are addressed also by Jackson who takes a critical look at the relationship between urban development and Aboriginal sea and land rights. She uses the town of Broome and the city of Darwin to illustrate the importance of understanding indigenous community decision-making in the overall process. Her argument for indigenous participation is set against, what can best be described as, a wall of ignorance within the wider non-indigenous community system which, when it responds to indigenous claims, sometimes attempts to trivialise publicly the Aboriginal culture. Obviously, historical experiences are a central feature of the dialogue between the two (broadly speaking) societies—indigenous and post-colonial—and, this is a characteristic of almost all of the examples provided in this volume. In Chapter 7, for example, Hyndman and Duhaylungsod provide an

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outline of the struggle for tribal rights in the Philippines—a country where history was shaped, first, by the Spaniards and, second, by the Americans. The Philippines does not provide institutional recognition of indigenous land nor any formidable judicial decisions regarding the legal status of indigenous rights to land. In Australia, as we know, the Mabo decision altered the balance of indigenous rights and, although still struggling, the indigenous peoples have moved positively towards achieving an institutional foothold in the system—particularly in negotiating with the resource industry. This is part of the issue which Edmunds (Chapter 8) and Robinson (Chapter 9) explore in relation to perceptions of the role of indigenous women in the post-Mabo resource and rights paradigm.

The achievements of Aboriginal people in Australia, particularly in the arts, their ascendancy politically and in having the confidence to claim ownership of their own culture, dominates Part 3 of the book (Davies and Young). This section provides a useful introduction to the negotiations that have taken place over access to traditional lands resources in Cape York (Lane and Chase) Cape Flattery (O'Faircheallaigh) and, under very different circumstances, in Sarawak (Arentz). Part 4 deals with compensation and monitoring agreements in Indo-China and Papua New Guinea. The chapters in this section cover very contentious issues such as dams and mines which, in some developing countries, have dislocated entire populations and proven to be an environmental and economic disaster (Hirsch; Banks; Kennedy). In the final section of this collection, the authors look at legislation and the role of government in New Zealand (Memon and Cullen), ethnicity and development in Laos

(Tubtim et al.), the question of dual laws over land in the Northern Territory (Head and Hughes) and the impending upheaval of relentlessly exploiting resources in Papua New Guinea (Filer). Perhaps as a postscript to all of the problems that this volume exposes, the last chapter by McHugh explores the legal and constitutional position of Aboriginal peoples in Canada and Australia.

Overall, this is a book of cross-disciplinary significance. Up until now, at least from an Australian perspective, most of the works on indigenous peoples follow a secure and well worn path (somewhat relentlessly) of comparing the governing institutions of Australian indigenous peoples with those of other western nations—particularly Canada. This volume makes a refreshing and long overdue departure from that and stands as an important contribution to an area of research which has remained largely in the domain of literature on development. It is highly readable and offers an introduction into an area of research which, in Australia, has long been neglected.

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The Pacific Islands and the USA

Ron Crocombe, 1995. University of the South Pacific, Suva, 418pp, maps, illustration, index, ISBN 9820201160

If you are looking for one book to read about US involvement in the Pacific islands, this is it. The amount of information contained in the book is almost encyclopedic. It contains more information than most people probably

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would ever want to know about United States–Pacific islands relationship. No way can you remember all the information—political, economic, military, ideological, social and cultural—in one reading.

What is so admirable about this book is Ron Crocombe's skill in using all that information to support the central theme of the book, which is the US role and importance in Oceania has been declining since the end of the Cold War. Inundated by so much detail, it is easy to forget the central message of the book, but throughout the book Crocombe never lost sight of the central theme.

Crocombe notes at the outset that the overwhelming factor in the relationship between the United States and the Pacific islands is 'scale'. The United States has 50 times more population, about 800 times more GNP, and even larger degree of military and media power than the 22 countries and territories of the South Pacific Commission (SPC) combined. Except in Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa and in Micronesia, the United States has not been the most dominant external influence in the region. The UK, Australia, New Zealand and France have been the dominant players in the South Pacific. Thus, for the United States the Pacific islands have been of minor importance; but for the Pacific island states, the United States is a major factor. US interests in the Pacific has always been incidental to bigger and largely geopolitical interests elsewhere. US territorial interests in the Pacific was largely military. Almost all US official aid to the regional governments stem from US strategic interests; the level is determined more by US perceived needs than the needs of the recipients.

With the end of the Cold War, American interests in the Pacific have waned. By contrast, East Asian influence

(particularly from Japan) has grown in relative importance as American influence has receded. American political representation has shrunk through the closure of embassies or non-replacement of ambassadors, and US official government aid has declined while that from Japan and other Asian countries have increased rapidly. Japanese and other Asian private investors are replacing American investors. The United States used to be the significant source of goods and a minor source of services to the Pacific islands. Now Americans are losing market share to Asian suppliers. The percentage of US tourists to Pacific island destinations is falling while that from Asia is rising. American influence is declining 'on almost every dimension'. Indeed, while Crocombe emphasises the relative decline of America in the Pacific, he provides plenty of evidence of its absolute decline in many areas.

Why has this decline occurred? Crocombe cites William Holstein's argument that rather than focusing on geopolitical and ideological issues, Japan (and the other Asian countries) are primarily interested in economic growth. With no external threat in the 1990s, Japan's approach is more effective than United States'. The United States by contrast, is turning increasingly to domestic issues. At the same time, East Asia's main economies have grown much faster than that of the United States and their combined populations are seven times larger than the United States; not surprisingly, Asians are eclipsing Americans in the Pacific. In the coming Pacific Century, the United States tends to see the Pacific Basin as a donut. Its East Asian competitors, however, are not making that mistake. Crocombe argues that it would be in the US interest to promote further positive interaction with the Island nations. How

do you persuade Americans to heed his advice?

Perhaps, the first step to move this idea along, is to give a copy of this book to the US President, Vice President, every member of Congress, and the Secretaries of Commerce and State.

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A Place Against Time: land and environment in the Papua New Guinea highlands

Paul Sillitoe, 1996. Studies in Environmental Anthropology Volume 1, Harwood Academic Publishers, Amsterdam, xxv, 438pp, ISBN 3 7186 5925 5, US\$75.00.

The old adage that individual anthropologists end up working with communities whose character approximates their own finds strong support in this, the author's fourth book on the Wola people of the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea: when Paul Sillitoe describes the Wola as 'flying in the face of population-resource-pressure arguments', one cannot help but observe that the author is, perhaps, a Wola at heart, willingly flying in the face of anything that passes for conventional wisdom. With each successive book Sillitoe has dug deeper into the minutiae of Wola society and subsistence practices; complementing his earlier volumes on exchange, crops and material culture, this is a massively detailed account of the Wola environment, of the climatic, botanic and pedological conditions for Wola agriculture.

The problem posed by Sillitoe, and it is one with considerable significance for

the broader region, is to understand how the Wola agricultural system can be sustainable and occasionally even improve on crop yields, given the repeated cultivation of garden sites with minimal fallow periods and with no external amendments. Because he finds that the Wola are not given to articulating a 'theory of why'—a thoroughgoing explanation for their gardening practices—Sillitoe turns instead to Western natural science in an attempt to compare Wola statements about their practices with his own verifiable and measurable scientific observations.

In a series of chapters on such topics as 'ethnometeorology', 'ethnogeoscience', 'ethnopedology' and the more familiar 'ethnobotany', Wola perspectives on the climate, geology, soils and plants are contrasted with the results of the author's detailed field and laboratory studies. Though these central chapters read at times like a textbook for undergraduate agronomists, some of the results are certainly impressive. He is able to demonstrate that, for the Wola at least, it is access to the labour of greater numbers of women rather than the ownership of richer garden sites that enables the wealthier men to amass larger herds of pigs. There is equally convincing evidence that soil nutrient requirements are broadly significant only insofar as they affect the yield of green foodstuffs rather than the staple tubers, and that the diminishing return to labour investments rather than exhaustion of overall soil fertility is the key determinant of garden abandonment. The author also has a commendable eye for ethnographic detail, documenting Wola accounts of the fruiting cycle of fungi and the metamorphosis sequences for grubs and psychids, and noting how the life forces of slaughtered pigs are said to enter individual moths and butterflies.

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But, at the conclusion of this enormous undertaking, Sillitoe has surprisingly little to say about why Wola garden in the way they do, finding no obvious correlations between his scientific results and Wola statements about their own practices or his observations on the structure of Wola society: there is no discernible pattern to the holding of richer garden sites in terms of either social status, kinship groups or age, and there is no obvious match between Wola soil classification and computer-generated soil categories. These are certainly intriguing findings but, without a coherent framework for the Wola logic that underwrites their subsistence practices, he is at a loss to account for them.

The book's principal theoretical contribution is a challenge to the establishment view that land degradation poses a significant threat to small-scale agricultural subsistence in Melanesia. Despite his comments that Wola pay little attention to soil quality in selecting garden sites, that they practice no soil conservation measures and regard the soil as 'there to be exploited, to the full', Sillitoe insists that Wola agricultural practices are 'broadly sustainable' and represent a 'stable management system'. But throughout the book there is little wider historical or regional context that might allow us to judge whether these claims extend either over a period of time longer than the 20 years of Sillitoe's experience or beyond Wola territory. The Wola communities with which Sillitoe has worked are basically pioneers in a vast tract of land with a shallow history of exploitation: 'The Wola have abundant resources... They think the environment has a [sic] infinite buffer capacity, rather as we thought of the sea until recently'. But this is simply not true for other communities of the New Guinea Highlands, such as the neighbouring Huli

of the Paijaka Plateau, for whom the spectres of soil loss and land degradation feature prominently both in agricultural practice and in daily discourse. Population increase plays a very real role in the progression from Wola abundance to Huli land degradation. Sillitoe recognises this, but fails to engage with the considerable body of comparative literature available to him in the Highlands which might have allowed him to demonstrate the broader significance of his Wola results. The most significant omission in this respect is the lack of any reference to the thesis by Paul Wohlt on the history of agriculture among the Yumbisa Enga, a short distance to the north of the Wola, which pays exactly the sort of attention to historical trajectories for changes in population and land that is sorely missing here.

But more worrying is the gap between the author's frequent injunctions to 'respect local knowledge' and his own practice which gives surprisingly little voice to the Wola (the extensive documentation of Wola terminology notwithstanding). Nowhere in the book is the energy devoted to the scientific studies matched by a comparable enthusiasm for what might be called a Wola system of thought or cosmology. Individual statements scattered throughout the chapters about Wola concepts of grease, heat and moisture hint at the possibility, explored by ethnographers elsewhere in the Highlands, of broader theories of growth and decline—precisely the sense of an overall Wola logic that might have supplied Sillitoe with a viable counterpart to his natural science. When, after 400-odd pages dominated by soil science, he asks rhetorically (and with no trace of irony) why we should be 'prone to think... that our soil science is the more insightful because it debates analytically

the management of natural processes', it is hard not to observe that the Wola too debate analytically the management of natural resources but not, perhaps, in terms that the author has fully appreciated. Is it too much to call for a fifth volume, in which the author turns his remarkable energy and skills to the task of describing the more fundamental bases for Wola 'ethnoscience'?

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Restructuring the Papua New Guinea Defence Force: strategic analysis and force structure principles for a small state

Paul Dibb and Rhondda Nicholas, 1996.
Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, The
Australian National University, Canberra, xii,
162pp, illustrations, ISBN 073152490X

Given Papua New Guinea's historical and future importance to Australia, the report on restructuring the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) by Paul Dibb and Rhondda Nicholas would be pertinent at any time, but it is especially relevant at a time when the Papua New Guinea government recently hired a company, staffed by foreign ex-soldiers, ostensibly to retrain its military force. Reopening, and providing long-term security for, the Panguna copper mine on Bougainville cannot be uncoupled from the hire of the euphemistically titled 'Executive Outcomes'. Among the many issues that the arrival of Executive Outcomes highlights, is that the PNGDF in its existing form and capability has not been

able to do the job (whatever one thinks the 'job' on or off Bougainville should have been). The PNGDF's structure is largely derived from an Australian model, and its training has largely been provided by Australia, or latterly based on an Australian model. Manifestly these have been inadequate, and not only on Bougainville.

Restructuring the Papua New Guinea Defence Force proposes strong medicine: too strong probably for the PNG government to swallow; and certain to be resisted by the PNG Defence Force. The recommendations include the reduction of the Defence Force by about 25 per cent, including the immediate redundancy of over 1000 on the Reserve Short List/ Unallotted List; the number of colonels and above to be reduced from 18 to 8; a 50 per cent decrease in headquarter staffs; the abolition of the Air Transport Squadron and the Engineer Battalion and the halving of the Defence Department itself. The medicine is delivered unadulterated: the book contains comments such as 'the allocation of more money is not the answer to the problems facing Papua New Guinea's Defence Force' and 'acquiring expensive new defence equipment will not make the Force more effective' (p55).

The proposals for significant force structure changes are nested within proposals that are even more far-reaching. The PNGDF would be supported and maintained essentially from the private sector, and what are seen by PNGDF commanders as some of their key operational capabilities, such as rotary and fixed-wing air transport, would also be provided by the private sector. Administrative support would be coordinated with the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC, Papua New Guinea's police force). Most significantly, the purpose of Papua New

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Guinea's military forces would in reality be redefined to being the provision of internal security, fisheries patrolling, and civic action.

These are all issues over which there has been debate, both within Papua New Guinea, and in Australia, for the last 25 years. Conventional wisdom based on a host of examples in post-colonial Africa would argue that a Papua New Guinea government dependent on its military for internal security would be a government shorn of its independence. On the other hand, there has always been resistance within the PNGDF to changing the focus of the Force from protecting the State against an external threat. An element of that resistance, which the Dibb/Nicholas force structure proposals makes manifest, is that internal security and civic action would mean a loss of 'military' capability, and no capability enhancement.

The analytical framework for the Dibb/Nicholas conclusions is no different in its fundamentals from that put by the Australian Department of Defence to Papua New Guinea over the last 10 years or so, but Dibb and Nicholas have the advantage of being able to call a spade a shovel. This is one of the report's greatest strengths, but the clear origin of the conceptual framework in Australian defence strategy and thinking is also its greatest vulnerability. Terminology such as 'credible contingencies', and any threat being 'both improbable and remote in time', as well as significant concepts such as warning time, have an apparent linkage with successive Australian strategic basis documents. This is not to suggest that they are necessarily inappropriate for Papua New Guinea, but rather that their obvious origin in Australian strategic thinking will be a strike against them in a country in which attitudes to Australia and Australians are at best ambivalent.

Those who want to sink the report, and there will be a number of strange bedfellows in that group, have been handed another, and potent weapon in the report's adamant conclusion that Papua New Guinea faces 'no foreseeable threat'. It would be unthinkable, the report argues, for Indonesia to let its relationship with Papua New Guinea deteriorate to the point of armed conflict. This conclusion lies at the foundation of the proposition that the PNGDF should be structured and trained to meet the real and demonstrable threats to internal security.

The issue is not whether the judgement is true or false, but rather that it is a hostage to fortune to those in Papua New Guinea who will dispute the remainder of the report. Although the Papua New Guinea government and its officials are substantially less paranoid about Indonesia than they were a decade ago, one does not have to scratch too deeply to find lingering concerns about Indonesia's long-term intentions.

Even if the Dibb/Nicholas report were to be implemented, there would have to be doubt about whether the results would measure up to the aspiration. Dispersed small unit operations, long range border patrolling, and civic action operations are enormously more testing of training and discipline than the more conventional operations on which the PNGDF has so far focused, and in which it has not proved adequate.

The costing basis in the report could be dissected and scrutinised. Even more significant, however, are the presumptions for achieving organisational effectiveness. It is questionable whether the proposed reforms either within the Defence Department or the disciplined services can be achieved through instruments such as force restructure and

commercial out-sourcing. The 'poor discipline' that is recognised in the PNGDF (and in the RPNGC) needs to be understood in cultural terms; the process of reform needs to be grappled with in terms of cultural change, and the instruments for achieving the cultural changes necessary to organisational effectiveness and efficiency need to be soundly grounded in indigenous society (rather than simply in the society of the report authors). Without foundations of this kind, the proposed reforms, even if embraced by the Papua New Guinea government, are unlikely to be implemented. Much more attention to enabling and managing change processes is necessary for the report's ideas to gain operational significance.

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They Came for Savages: 100 years of tourism in Melanesia

Ngairé Douglas, 1996. Southern Cross University Press, Lismore, 300pp, maps, tables, illustrations, ISBN 1875855149

From the earliest days of the Burns Philp round-trip steamer passengers, tourists surely rather came to New Guinea, Vanuatu and the Solomons for the exotic in general, scenery and climate in particular.

Perhaps an ungainly title, therefore, barely appropriate in the best of cases, since not too many islanders would seriously relish the description. And the colonial history of these island groups that Dr Douglas makes the subject of her otherwise perfectly capable comparative study was not always as her reading of

tertiary texts like J. Kent on *The Solomon Islands* leads her in detail to believe for the sketchy purposes of her opening chapter; while anyone knowing Dr Marie Reay, who is rather slighted in the course of a glance at anthropologists as self-privileged and intrusive tourists, would probably doubt whether she would actually have been troubled in the least if, reciprocally, 'a "primitive" Melanesian had moved into her Anglo-American community [Australian, in reality] and proceeded to observe and record her behaviour' (p175).

The author's quotation of ni-Vanuatu Grace Molisa's invocation in verse is more apt: 'Give us/this day/divine guidance/in our choice/of tourists/technical advisers/investors/and entrepreneurs' (p169). And a fragment of Rabbie Namaliu's long pre-Prime Ministerial play *Kannibal Tours* makes a telling inclusion.

If sometimes the touch can seem a little uncertain in detail, then, Dr Douglas's confidence more generally seems well placed, as the result of more contemporary research and a familiarity with the region gained as sometime joint editor of the *Pacific Islands Yearbook*. The familiarity very naturally does not diminish scepticism about the multitude of official reports produced from 1968 onward when tourism became seen by semi-optimistic island governments as possibly a serious adjunct to their revenue basis and their peoples' employment prospects. 'Most', as she foreshadows on page 9, 'gave grandiose speculations about rates of development, visitor figures and targeted areas, few of which have seen any development at all.'

As usual, World War II is seen as a watershed, though with its various degrees of impact admittedly slow to appear in terms of actual paying visitors.

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The purely indigenous private tourist ventures discussed are small and may involve tears or even occasional violence such as the forcible closing of joint-owned resorts, though Sepik as well as Solomons handicrafts have brought local income (and Solomon Islands work may be purchased at the Fiji Government Tourist Shop in Suva). With the pre-independence New Hebrides Condominium Administration far less active than governments in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon, private enterprise pushed aggressively ahead in emerging Vanuatu, working through the Tourist Information Bureau but undoubtedly helped by government's establishment of the tax haven. But overall, and in contrast with the foreign-exchange and employment impact from tourism that Dr Douglas would have found if she had been working eastward from Melanesia proper, she is not enamoured of tourism's capacity to play any major part in the national economies of her three island states, at any rate given the nature of political life in a place like the Solomons where, with a directness surely worth all the 'theorists' laboured through in chapter eight, a chief information officer once commented (p262) that the state's infrastructure was 'barely able to support daily life let alone tourism!'

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