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The Coming Anarchy in Oceania? A Critique of the 'Africanisation' of the South Pacific Thesis

JON FRAENKEL

This article considers claims, in the wake of coups in Fiji and the Solomon Islands in 2000, that the Pacific region is experiencing 'African'-style difficulties. It argues that the Africanisation thesis is analytically weak, internally inconsistent and empirically flawed. Data covering GDP per capita, literacy, schooling and life expectancy are explored, as are indicators covering coups, insurgencies and military involvement in politics. Claimed similarities between the role played by 'ethnicity' in driving conflict are considered, as are comparisons of the role played by the post-colonial state. In conclusion, the article looks at the underlying causes of conflict, and potential for future instability, in Melanesia

Sierra Leone is a microcosm of what is occurring, albeit in a more tempered and gradual manner, throughout West Africa and much of the underdeveloped world: the withering away of central governments, the rise of tribal and regional domains, the unchecked spread of disease, and the growing pervasiveness of war. It is Thomas Malthus, the philosopher of demographic doomsday, who is now the prophet of West Africa's future ... And West Africa's future, eventually, will also be that of most of the rest of the world.¹

COMFORTING ANALOGIES

When the Malaita Eagle Forces dislodged the Solomon Islands' elected government on 5 June 2000, the event was widely depicted as a 'copy-cat

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coup' inspired by George Speight's seizure of Fiji's parliament three weeks earlier.² The next day, Australian Prime Minister John Howard publicly warned that Papua New Guinea might be the next state to fall,³ and Vanuatu soon joined the ranks of recognised threatened states. The Solomons coup was a 'direct progeny of the coup in Fiji', explained *The Australian's* foreign editor Greg Sheridan, warning that the South Pacific was sliding towards 'an abyss of African dimensions'.⁴ 'The Fiji coup begat the Solomon Islands coup', he emphasised several days later.⁵ *The Bulletin's* Michael Maher argued that the 'Speight coup played a key role in shaping the past weeks' events in the Solomons', echoing concerns in Canberra about a 'deep sense of primordial loyalties' inflaming tribal conflict throughout a new 'arc of instability' stretching around the north of Australia.⁶ Notions of common causes and mutual interconnection served not only as a rousing call to antipodean action, but also as an explanation-by-analogy for the otherwise perplexing 18-month old conflict on Guadalcanal.

Only a week before Speight marched into Fiji's parliament, *The Economist* had featured 'The Hopeless Continent' on its front cover, describing Africa as a region whose peoples were 'especially susceptible' to 'brutality, despotism and corruption ... for reasons buried deep in their cultures'.⁷ Just as the Solomon Islands conflict was to be accounted for by the coup in Fiji, so too the Australian press cast Fiji's George Speight in the role of an African coup leader cast adrift in the Pacific. Rediscovering Africa in the Oceania provided an easy alternative to explanation, even for the Royal Institute of International Affairs magazine *The World Today*. 'Teenage fighters roam the streets with guns ransacked from local armouries in a scene that could fit anywhere in the failing states of Somalia, Sierra Leone or Liberia' led an article written by International Institute of Strategic Studies expert David Shearer. 'With ethnic tension switching to ethnic violence, the Pacific, like Africa, needs to be seen for what it is, a region facing chronic instability.'⁸

In a similar vein, the Australian National University's Ben Reilly invoked 'frightening parallels' between George Speight's bid for ethnic Fijian paramountcy and Idi Amin's 'Fiji-like crusade against the community from the Indian subcontinent in Uganda', a comparison also drawn by the novelist Salman Rushdie writing in the *New York Times*.⁹ This was no longer merely off-the-cuff sensationalist journalism, at least in terms of when and where it was being written. In the *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Reilly expounded a full-blown theory of the 'Africanisation of the South Pacific'. The South Pacific Island states, he explained, were now 'on a par with sub-Saharan Africa' in terms of GDP per capita, education, employment, and health, and were experiencing four inter-related

phenomena that have long been associated with violent conflict and the failure of democratic government in Africa:

- the growing tensions in the relationship between civil regimes and the military forces;
- the intermixture between ethnic identity and competition for control of natural resources as factors driving conflicts;
- the weakness of basic institutions of governance, such as prime ministers, parliaments and, especially, political parties; and
- the increasing centrality of the state as a means of gaining wealth and of accessing and exploiting resources.¹⁰

This article argues that the 'Africanisation' thesis is analytically weak, internally inconsistent and empirically flawed. Some Melanesian states face serious underlying tensions, but political crises tend to be localised, episodic and obedient to very specific historical causes which are not adequately explained by the loose and rather ill-informed analogy with Africa. Only parts of Melanesia face grinding poverty and urban squalor remotely near African levels, and nowhere are protracted and interlinked civil wars involving multiple states, as in the D.R. Congo or Liberia-Sierra Leone, a realistic possibility. Africa is upheld as a synonym for economic decay, state collapse and wanton violence, although, troubled as it may be, that continent is scarcely obedient to some generally prevalent dynamic that can be plausibly captured by the rather vacuous term 'Africanisation'. The intention here is not to belittle the gravity of existing, or threatened, challenges to constitutional rule or to portray a rosy future for the Pacific region. Indeed, some common trends underlying recent disturbances suggest continued instability in parts of Melanesia. The point is rather that Afro-catastrophism does little to advance our understanding of the causes of recent Pacific crises and is therefore unlikely to generate effective policy responses.

In the second part of this article, we explore data covering GDP per capita, literacy, schooling and life expectancy, finding little evidence for claimed socioeconomic similarities between the two regions. Subsequent sections address the points raised by Reilly in turn. The third section assesses the experience of coups, secessionist movements and insurgencies. The fourth section looks at the claim that 'ethnicity in the South Pacific remains similar to that in Africa'. Section five discusses the World Bank model predicting global prospects for civil war relied upon by Reilly to identify a 'serious risk' of resource-driven conflict in the Pacific in the years ahead. Parts six and seven examine the role of political parties, electoral systems and the state in the two regions. The conclusion emphasises the

distinctiveness of the Fiji and Solomon Islands conflicts and considers what lessons can be drawn from the African literature.

COMPARATIVE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

Pivotal to the Africanisation thesis is the claim that the Pacific Islands now face sub-Saharan African levels of GDP per capita, life expectancy, literacy and schooling rates.¹¹ This claim has been questioned by Firth, who drew on data from the UNDP's annual *Human Development Index* (HDI) to show that the Pacific Island states are mostly in the 'medium human development' category while the sub-Saharan African countries are mostly in the 'low human development' range.¹² Reilly responded, applauding the use of this data source, but insisting on 'two crucial facts' in defence of the Africanisation thesis. The first was that Firth used data from 1997, 'well before the crisis of governance and the coups in Fiji and the Solomon Islands that formed the basis of my "Africanisation" article'. The second was that 'the majority of South Pacific countries – including all Micronesian states and territories, and all Polynesian states and territories bar Samoa – are not even included in the HDI index he refers to'.¹³ Updating and extending the coverage of the HDI would then presumably be expected to vindicate these claims.

The HDI aims at a composite indicator of 'human welfare' that goes beyond the more familiar gross domestic product per capita estimates by including quality of life measures to assess knowledge, health and living standards. Whatever their potential theoretical value, these data need to be handled with exceptional care.¹⁴ Given variations in school year length, drop-out rates and educational quality, HDI data for literacy and education are notoriously error prone. The Pacific Islands data are particularly weak. Judging from successive annual HDIs, for example, Solomon Islands adult literacy rose, quite unbelievably, from 24 per cent in 1992 to 76.6 per cent in 2000, while that in Vanuatu, even more implausibly, fell from 64 per cent to 34 per cent in the single year 1999–2000.¹⁵ Obviously, a mere change in the data source was responsible. Adjustments of conventional GDP per capita data to yield purchasing power parity (PPP) figures rely on elaborate cost of living adjustments which, because they have never been empirically undertaken for any of the Pacific countries, are devised by econometric regression.¹⁶ Relatively strong subsistence sectors, particularly for the larger Melanesian Islands, are also notoriously poorly recorded in existing GDP data, although these have ensured that no Pacific country has experienced famine of the kind familiar to many parts of Africa.

Nevertheless, some clear conclusions can be drawn. Table 1 shows data for the year 2000, the year in which both the Fiji and Solomon Islands'

TABLE 1
COMPARATIVE INDICATORS FOR THE PACIFIC AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA,
2000

	Real GDP per capita (PPP\$ ¹) (1)	GNI per capita (US\$) ² (2)	Life Expectancy at birth (3)	Adult Literacy Rate (%) (4)	School Enrolment Ratio (%) ³ (5)	Human Development Index ⁴ (6)
Fiji	4,668	1,820	69.1	92.9	83	0.758
Samoa	5,041	1,450	69.2	80.2	65	0.715
Solomon Islands	1,648	620	68.3	76.6	50	0.622
Vanuatu	2,802	1,150	68.0	34.0	38	0.542
Papua New Guinea	2,280	700	56.7	63.9	38	0.535
Sub-Saharan Africa	1,960	470	48.7	61.5	42	0.471
Civil war-afflicted African states:						
Congo, Dem. Rep.	765 ⁵	100	51.3	61.4	31	0.431
Rwanda	943	230	40.2	66.8	40	0.403
Mozambique	854	210	39.3	44.0	23	0.322
Sierra Leone	490	130	38.9	36.0	27	0.275
Angola	2,187	290	45.2	42.0	23	0.403

Notes: ¹ Purchasing power parity

² Gross national income converted using the World Bank Atlas method, which, in cases of potential distortions arising from exceptional currency fluctuations, smoothes exchange \$ rates.

³ School enrolment ratio is the ratio of the number of children engaged in primary, secondary and tertiary education to those in the relevant age group

⁴ The Human Development index (0-1, with 1 highest) is a weighted Index drawn from data on longevity (1/3 weight), education and literacy levels (1/3 weight) and real GDP per capita at purchasing power parity (1/3 weight).

⁵ Data for 1998.

Source: UNDP, *Human Development Report 2002* (Oxford University Press, 2002); column (2) from World Bank, *World Development Indicators*, 2002.

economies were seriously damaged by George Speight's seizure of Fiji's parliament and the Malaita Eagle Forces coup, along with the associated struggles on Guadalcanal. Only five Pacific states are included in the global HDI, and these are shown alongside the average figure covering the 48 states brought together under the UN's sub-Saharan African rubric, together with five of those states that have experienced major conflict since the end of the Cold War. Given the absence of reliable purchasing power parity data, column 2 for comparative purposes introduces the World Bank's less elaborate US dollar figures. Probably the only robust conclusions that can be drawn from Table 1 are that:

- (i) Samoa and Fiji were well above the 48 state sub-Saharan African average level, and out-ranked their Melanesian neighbours in all respects;
- (ii) for PNG, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands, gross national income per capita in dollar terms, and life expectancy were both well above the sub-Saharan average (i.e., columns 2 and 3). Given the great uncertainties surrounding comparisons of schooling, literacy and the cost of living adjustments that underlie the PPP figures, we avoid drawing definitive conclusions based on these data (i.e., columns 1, 3 and 4). If, as implied by the purchasing power parity data, the cost of living is far higher in the Pacific than in Africa, then only the Solomon Islands, owing to its 28.2 per cent fall in GDP per capita during 1997–2000, slipped below the sub-Saharan average;
- (iii) crisis-stricken sub-Saharan states, such as Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Mozambique and Sierra Leone performed considerably worse, in all respects, than their Pacific counterparts. Oil- and diamond-rich Angola matched the lowest positioned Pacific state in terms of GDP per capita at PPP, but none of the other indicators.

Hence, updating the HDI to take into account the impact of the 2000 crises

TABLE 2
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX FOR THE PACIFIC ISLANDS COUNTRIES, 1998

	Real GDP per capita (US\$) (1)	Life Expectancy at birth (2)	Adult Literacy Rate (%) (3)	School Enrolment Ratio (%) ¹ (4)	Human Development Index ² (5)
Palau	8,027	69.0	91.4	83.4	0.861
Cook Islands	4,947	72.0	93.2	84.8	0.822
Niue	3,714	74.0	97.0	83.6	0.774
Fiji Islands	2,684	66.5	92.9	81.3	0.667
Nauru	3,450	58.2	95.0	79.5	0.663
Tonga	1,868	68.0	99.0	83.3	0.647
Samoa	1,060	66.6	95.7	85.7	0.590
Tuvalu	1,157	67.0	95.0	74.0	0.583
Micronesia, Fed. States	2,070	65.7	71.3	71.4	0.569
Marshall Islands	1,182	65.0	74.4	71.7	0.563
Kiribati	702	61.6	92.2	67.8	0.515
Vanuatu	1,231	65.8	33.5	57.4	0.425
Solomon Islands	926	64.7	30.3	34.7	0.371
Papua New Guinea	1,196	54.0	28.2	28.6	0.314

Notes: ¹ Figures differ slightly from those used in the global HDI. They show the gross enrolment ratios for 5–19 year olds, and do not include tertiary education.

² Not comparable with global HDI owing to use of US\$ GDP data, rather than PPP data.

Source: UNDP, *Pacific Human Development Report 1999* (Suva, 1999).

TABLE 3
SUPPLEMENTARY HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS FOR THE US AND
FRENCH TERRITORIES, 2000

	Real GDP per capita (US\$)	Life Expectancy at birth	Adult Literacy Rate %
<i>US Territories</i>			
Hawaii	30,623	82.0 ³	n/a
Guam	21,000	77.9	99.0
American Samoa	8,000	75.3	97.0
Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas	12,500	75.7	97.0
<i>French Territories</i>			
French Polynesia	10,800 ¹	75.0	98.0
New Caledonia	15,000 ²	73.0	91.0
Wallis & Futuna	2,000 ¹	n/a	50.0

Notes: 1 Data for 1997.
2 Data for 1998.
3 Data for 1990.

Sources: CIA World Factbook, 2001 (www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook).

in Fiji and the Solomon Islands does not reinforce the 'Africanisation' thesis.

Second, would an extension of the Pacific coverage of the HDI reinforce the claimed African parallels? The UNDP also commissions, on an occasional basis, a *Pacific Human Development Report*, the most recent of which covered the year 1998. This gives complete data covering 14 independent Pacific Island states, although using GDP per capita at dollar exchange rates owing to the unavailability of purchasing power parity adjustment indices. Table 2 shows that the three Pacific countries that were closest to the sub-Saharan average (as shown in Table 1) were in fact the poorest of all the independent Pacific Island states. PNG, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands were also found to have the lowest HDI positions in the previous *Pacific Human Development Report* published back in 1994.¹⁷

Further extending this coverage to include the US and French overseas territories (Table 3) sharpens this contrast. Hawaii, the fiftieth US state, is 65 times wealthier than the sub-Saharan average, while the US territory Guam is 45 times richer. South of the equator, Tahiti and its neighbouring islands are 23 times as rich as the sub-Sahara, while Melanesia's New Caledonia – which figures in Reilly's analysis only to show the prevalence of bipolar-type ethnic division outside Fiji – has a GDP per capita 32 times that of sub-Saharan Africa. Judged by the available data, all of those territories shown in Table 3 would therefore fit into the top half of Table 2.

Hence, extending the coverage of the HDI to other Pacific states, whether or not we include the relatively prosperous dependent territories, gives no support to the 'Africanisation of the Pacific' claims.

For our purposes, then, the only vaguely plausible comparison, judging from available socio-economic data, is between the Melanesian states, excluding New Caledonia, and those in Africa. This is the main focus in the sections that follow.

CIVIL CONFLICT AND WARFARE

The second claimed similarity, 'growing tensions in the relationship between civil regimes and the military forces', seriously overstates the problem in the Pacific, and gravely understates that in Africa. From the end of the Cold War up to 2000, sub-Saharan Africa faced not merely widespread civil-military tensions, but a succession of civil wars: Angola (1989–94, 1998–99), Burundi (1998, 2000), Chad (1990), Congo (1997–99), Democratic Republic of Congo (1997–2000), Ethiopia/Eritrea (1989–91, 1998–2000), Guinea-Bissau (1998), Liberia (1990, 1992), Mozambique (1989–92), Rwanda (1991–92, 1998), Sierra Leone (1998–99), South Africa (1989–93), Somalia (1989–92), and Uganda (1989, 1991).¹⁸ By contrast, the only civil wars to have occurred in the Pacific are the Bougainville Revolutionary Army's (BRA) decade of conflict with the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (1988–98), which resulted in an estimated 10,000 war-related deaths, and the West Papua–Indonesia conflict, in which as many as 50–60,000 may have died since the 1960s.

Bougainville and West Papua aside, media coverage of contemporary conflict in the Pacific rarely highlights the relatively low level of casualties as compared to those in Africa. Rwanda's 1994 genocide left somewhere between 500,000 and one million dead, two million were killed in Sudan's 1983–2002 civil war, the Mozambican conflict left over a million dead, and two and a half million people died from war-related causes in Ugandan and Rwandan controlled Democratic Republic of Congo. By contrast, perhaps 200–500 deaths tragically resulted from skirmishes in the Solomon Islands during 1998–2003. In Fiji, a succession of minor clashes between rebels and the security forces in the wake of George Speight's takeover of parliament resulted in a total of 16 deaths, not a single one of which occurred as a direct result of conflict between the country's ethnic Fijian and Indo-Fijian population. Only three of the independent Pacific states have military forces, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Tonga, the latter being an unswervingly loyal tool of the monarchist state. Kiribati disbanded its planned armed forces shortly after independence.¹⁹

Rumours of impending military coups have been a regular feature in Papua New Guinea since independence, fears fuelled by regular military

insubordination, *wantokism*²⁰ at barracks level, and recurrent political interference in military appointments. Reliance on the Papua New Guinea Defence Forces (PNGDF) to play a continuing internal security role in dealing with tribal fighting in New Guinea's highlands, urban instability, and the secessionist movement on the island of Bougainville, have enhanced the military's ability to hold the civilian government to ransom. In 1997, the PNG government's engagement of Sandline International, a South-African based mercenary services company, triggered a mutiny led by Defence Force commander Jerry Singirok. A further mutiny in 2001 narrowly focused on pay and conditions.

Yet the two leading authorities on civil-military relations in PNG both conclude that a coup 'seems to remain a very remote possibility', pointing to logistical difficulties in sustaining military authority in a country with poor internal communications, the small size of the army relative to PNG's population and the relatively high degree of ethnic fragmentation in PNGDF ranks.²¹ Electoral politics, in any case, has regularly offered senior military figures an alternative route to office. PNG's continuing governance failures, corruption, economic weakness, urban instability and tribal fighting in the highlands point to continuing 'pull factors' likely to sustain the PNGDF's political role, although if recent peace accords aimed at settling the civil war over Bougainville hold, one major reason for the military's enhanced role in PNG politics will have been removed.

Fiji's military forces staged a coup back in 1987, whereas during George Speight's so-called 'civilian coup' of 19 May 2001 they played an ambiguous role.²² Clearly, powerful figures within the 99 per cent ethnic Fijian Royal Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) backed the overthrow of the Labour-led government, and soldiers from the elite Counter-Revolutionary Warfare Squadron (CRW) participated both in the May putsch and a connected mutiny at the army's Queen Elizabeth Barracks in November 2000. None of the RFMF's senior officers explicitly backed a return to office by the deposed People's Coalition government, or the retention of the 1997 constitution. It was the military that removed President Mara from office, issued a decree abrogating the 1997 constitution, and eventually signed the Muanikau Accord providing for an amnesty for the rebels, thus satisfying all of George Speight's initial demands. It was the military that installed in office an un-elected and all indigenous Fijian interim administration. 'Young Turks' promoted through the ranks in the aftermath of Rabuka's 1987 coup saw the putsch as an opportunity for advancement.²³

Nevertheless, Fiji's military did not replay its 1987 role. Led by Commander Frank Bainimarama, loyal forces established a porous cordon around Fiji's parliamentary compound and, eventually in July, arrested coup

leader George Speight and many of his supporters. The military then clamped down on rebel villages near the country's major hydroelectric dam in Monasavu, in and around Speight's home district of Wainibuka, and on the island of Vanua Levu. Military claims that Speight and his followers had not returned all weapons seized from the army were instrumental in the high court's decision to remove the amnesty that Speight had secured as part of the Muanikau Accord, a decision that led to his conviction for high treason. Lieutenant-Colonel Viliame Seruvakula led his 3rd Infantry Regiment to suppress a mutiny at the army's Queen Elizabeth Barracks in November 2000, and soldiers involved in both the coup and mutiny were brought to trial and prosecuted. Despite clear strains, the military ultimately did not fragment along provincial lines during its conflict with the Speight-supporting rebels.

Although neither Vanuatu nor the Solomon Islands have standing armies, both have paramilitary forces. Failed palace coups in Vanuatu in 1988 and 1995, frequent civil rights abuses and cases of severe insubordination by the paramilitary Vanuatu Mobile Force (VMF) have encouraged fears that Vanuatu is among those Pacific states threatened by collapse.²⁴ The VMF abducted President Jean Marie Leye Lenelcau in 1996 in a protest about claims for \$US980,000 in unpaid allowances. In August 2002, VMF forces arrested the newly appointed Police Commissioner, Mael Apisai, complaining of irregularities surrounding his appointment. The courts subsequently overturned Apisai's appointment, but the head of the VMF, the former Police Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner were convicted and imprisoned on charges of mutiny, kidnapping and false imprisonment.

Yet protests about pay, conditions and appointments scarcely posed the same threat to the integrity of the Vanuatu state as did the secessionist movement on Santo and nearby northern islands, as well as on Tanna in the south of the chain, in the dying days of the 1906–80 Anglo-French Condominium. Following the victory of the Anglophone Vanua'aku Party in the November 1979 polls, Santo bush people led by Jimmy Stevens, French planters and *Kastom*-oriented groups on Tanna threatened a series of breakaways from what was perceived to be an impending Anglophone state. In March 1980, French Secretary of State for Overseas Departments and Territories, Paul Dijoud, in an effort to press the government-in-waiting into concessions on land ownership, language and citizenship rights, threatened that 'the opposition, with outside support, would create chaos and a civil war following the Condominium'.²⁵ In May, Jimmy Stevens declared the establishment of the Vemerana Provisional Government in Luganville, Santo. The rebellion was finally halted by the deployment of British, French and, crucially, PNG troops, but tensions generated during the Santo rebellion dominated Vanuatu's politics in the years after independence.

The Solomon Islands security forces proved unable to stand above the frictions that rocked Guadalcanal during 1998–2000. On 5 June 2000, the Police Field Force mounted a 'joint operation' with the Malaita Eagle Forces (MEF) to seize control of Honiara and depose the government of Bartholomew Ulufa'alu. For the previous 18 months, the rival Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM) had been driving settlers from the Guadalcanal Plains. Tensions associated with Malaitan inward migration to Guadalcanal had been building up for decades. Older, well-established settlers who had purchased land on the island had been joined by their *wantoks*, and the incoming migrants had encroached onto customary lands. The vast majority of those settlers were Malaitan, as were 65 per cent of those employed on the SIPL palm oil plantations in northern Guadalcanal.²⁶

By November 1999, an estimated 35,309 people (58.6 per cent of the Guadalcanal population) had been displaced.²⁷ SIPL shut down operations, as eventually did the Gold Ridge Mine in the mountainous interior. In the capital, Honiara, Prime Minister Bartholomew Ulufa'alu was unable to stop the turmoil in nearby rural areas. His government had relied on Guale MP support during successive failed 'no confidence' votes and, in turn, Guale senior statesmen feared that the young IFM militants were undermining their authority. The government's handling of the crisis on Guadalcanal, and reluctance to meet demands for compensation by evicted Malaitans, were the proximate causes of the 2000 coup.

The 5 June takeover was, however, not accompanied by the abrogation of the 1978 constitution. Three weeks later, parliament reassembled, under considerable duress, to elect a new government led by Mannaseh Sogavare. An MEF conspiracy to halt a domestic flight that would otherwise have picked pro-Ulufa'alu MPs up from Gizo in the Western province tipped the balance in favour of Sogavare by 23 votes to 21.²⁸ Guadalcanalese leaders nevertheless soon started working, indirectly, with the new government towards a settlement, with substantial Australian assistance. On 15 October 2000, a peace agreement was reached in Townsville, Queensland, providing for the surrender of weaponry to an International Peace Monitoring Team, an amnesty for IFM and MEF militants, compensation for dispossessed Malaitans and 'more autonomy by devolution or constitutional amendment to effect self-governing status'.²⁹ While conflict abated on the northern plains, dissident IFM leader Harold Keke continued to defy the government from Guadalcanal's remote Weather Coast and a faction of the MEF refused to disarm entirely. Elections in late 2001 saw a new government led by Sir Allan Kemakeza returned to office, but the deteriorating law and order situation and top-level corruption, particularly centred on controversial Taiwanese aid-funded compensation payments to Malaitan 'victims' (some

of whom turned out to be ministers with little genuine claim³⁰), combined to make this a fragile peace. Only an Australian-led military intervention force, arriving in July 2003, proved able to disarm and arrest the militia leaders, and restore some stability to government finances.

By contrast, Africa's coups, insurrections and insurgencies have, for several reasons, been far more ruthless and African military regimes have proved far more durable. Africa's post-Cold War conflicts have been frequently interlinked, and mutually reinforcing, as in the Great Lakes region, the Horn, West Africa and the southern cone of the continent. Rwandan Tutsi refugees assisted Museveni's victory in Uganda, before forming the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). They then launched attacks into Rwandese territory from southern Uganda and eventually seized Kigali in 1994, triggering the Hutu genocide against Tutsis. The RPF pursued Hutu militias into Zaire, sparking civil war in that country. The South African apartheid regime's security services sponsored Renamo and Unita respectively against the Frelimo government in Mozambique and the MPLA government in Angola, while Namibia's SWAPO, and Zimbabwe's ZANU and ZAPU were also reliant on an ability to attack across friendly frontiers. Both Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast permitted attacks across their own borders into Samuel Doe's Liberia, while Liberia's Charles Taylor later backed the invasion of Sierra Leone in 1991. At least seven separate armed groups were active in Liberia by 1997, all of which had important links with regional allies. Those allies also had soldiers on the ground participating in the Nigerian-brokered ECOMOG military intervention force.³¹ Civil war in the DR Congo did not only involve local ethnic tensions. Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi and Angola played out their own domestic conflicts on the Congolese stage, and Namibian and Zimbabwean troops were also involved. Greater distance between Pacific nations, and the political insularity of most island groups, very obviously diminishes the potential for analogous interrelationships.

Owing to its close proximity, Bougainville's war had major repercussions for the neighbouring Solomon Islands, in a way perhaps reminiscent of many African conflicts. Violent attacks by local land-owning groups on the Panguna Copper mine precipitated a clampdown by the PNG state, which in turn sparked a wider revolt. PNG blockaded the straits between Bougainville and the Western Solomon Islands during the conflict, and, at times, pursued rebels into Solomons territory. The 8,000 or so Bougainvillean refugees who fled to the Solomon Islands brought with them tales of the successful driving out of the 'redskins' (other PNG peoples). Bougainvillean fighters were briefly invited to establish a security force in the Solomons Western Province to resist the MEF, and IFM leaders openly acknowledged affinities with the Bougainville guerrillas. Home

made gun-making techniques spread from Bougainville to the Solomon Islands. In PNG and the Solomon Islands, where high powered shotguns sell for as little as US\$150–200,³² abundant sources of light arms, as well as home-made guns, imply continued potential for instability. In contrast, Fiji's military retained its monopoly on the use of armed force, sweeping up the bulk of those weapons seized from its Queen Elizabeth Barracks after the May 2000 coup.

In Africa, intersecting ethnic groups divided by porous borders encouraged the formation of 'refugee warrior communities', as did the closing down of the traditional exit and resettlement option for those fleeing repression.³³ In Zaire, internationally assisted camps acted as a base for post-pogrom Hutu fighters fleeing Rwanda, while long-term Rwandan Tutsi settlers in the Kivu region of eastern Zaire, who are denied land-rights, collaborated with the Rwandan army to overthrow the Mobutu regime.³⁴ Borders beyond the control of states – for example, between Angola and Zaire or Sierra Leone and Liberia – provided 'a haven for drug dealers and diamond smugglers, or anyone else who wanted to escape the impositions of statehood'.³⁵ Many African insurgent movements originated in the least accessible areas of the countryside, but proved able to strike across land towards the capital. Whilst remote Pacific islands may potentially provide a haven of retreat from central authority, they are scarcely effective bases from which to launch guerrilla attacks on the metropole. The larger volcanic Melanesian islands have more dispersed populations and rugged territory. Many parts of Papua New Guinea are beyond effective state control, and Guadalcanal's inaccessible Weather Coast proved a safe haven for renegade IFM militants. Fiji's conflict, by contrast, was hermetically sealed: not even the mountainous interior around Monasavu could provide a secure refuge for fleeing rebel CRW soldiers.

Nowhere in the Pacific were there Soviet or US client regimes comparable to those in Africa during the Cold War. Vanuatu's diplomatic overtures to Cuba, Libya and the USSR, and fishing deals signed by Kiribati and Vanuatu with the Soviets, were minor flirtations by African standards. By contrast, Cuba, the USSR and Libya played a significant role in establishing African client states. The Pacific never witnessed tyrannical Cold War-fostered regimes such as those of Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire, Daniel Arap Moi in Kenya or Juvenal Habyarimana in Rwanda. Mobutu, for example, banned all political parties, abolished the premiership, and centralised power to the capital, Kinshasa. The post-colonial Pacific's first coup, in Fiji in 1987, came sufficiently late to avoid being ploughed into the maelstrom of the Cold War.

No discussion of domestic civil–military tensions in the Pacific can ignore the broader geopolitical context. Pacific Island military forces are

TABLE 4
SELECTED INDICATORS; SOUTH PACIFIC AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA, 2000

	Population 000s	Aid <i>per</i> <i>Capita</i> US\$	Trade as % GDP
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Fiji	811.9	35.9	131.6
Samoa	170.0	161.0	114.7
Solomon Islands	447.0	153.0	119.61
Papua New Guinea	5,130.0	53.7	86.82
Vanuatu	197.0	232.5	97.83
Tonga	100.2	187.8	71.6
Kiribati	90.7	197.0	126.3
New Caledonia	212.7	1,646.3	46.12
French Polynesia	235.0	1,713.1	29.1
Marshall Islands	52.0	1,100.6	78.72
Micronesia, Fed States.	118.1	860.5	85.5
Palau	19.0	2,059.5	68.8
Sub-Saharan Africa	658,940	20.4	64.3

Notes: ¹1990 figure.

²1999 figure.

³1995 figure.

Source: World Bank, 2002, *World Development Indicators*.

dwarfed by those of the encircling metropolitan powers. The United States retains a sizeable military presence in Hawaii, Guam and at its Kwajalein base in the Marshall Islands. Australia and New Zealand possess forces capable of intervening in the southern Pacific, as they did in East Timor and the Solomon Islands, and carefully foster links with the upper echelons of PNGDF and RFMF. The US, Australia and New Zealand, as well as China and Japan, possess naval forces that regularly tour the region. Indonesia's vast army is the ultimate guarantor of the continued occupation of West Papua, and has regularly pursued Melanesian rebels into PNG territory. When Kanaks rose against French colonial rule in New Caledonia in the mid-1980s, they were easily contained by the deployment of some 9,000 French soldiers. Santo secessionists in Vanuatu abandoned their rebellion after the arrival of Papua New Guinean troops in 1980.

Aside from this military imbalance, the metropolitan powers exert a far more powerful influence in the Pacific region than in Africa. The South Pacific Island economies are the highest per capita recipients of aid in the world (see Table 4, column 2). Most of the economies are tiny, and highly dependent on trade with the industrialised countries (column 3). Fiji's sugar and garments industries, for example, are crucially reliant on preferential

trading agreements, such as the Sugar Protocol of the EU's Lome Convention and SPARTECA. Canned tuna from Fiji, PNG and the pre-crisis Solomon Islands, and PNG tree crop products, are exported to European markets at prices that depend on EU preferential margins. The Japanese automobile equipment plant in Apia, Samoa, is similarly conditional upon Australia's regional trade arrangements. Reliance on tourism incomes, particularly in Fiji, Vanuatu, and the Cook Islands, makes those governments particularly sensitive to negative foreign travel advice. Migration of Pacific Islanders overseas further strengthens external linkages. Samoa, Tonga, Niue and the Cook Islands have larger overseas-than domestic-resident populations. Remittances from those migrants, for the independent Polynesian states, form an unusually large part of earnings on the current account of the balance of payments. Diplomatic missions, and multilateral donor organisations, are positioned far more centrally in the corridors of power than in Africa.

AFRO-PACIFIC ETHNIC TENSIONS?

A third area of claimed similarity between the Pacific and Africa is 'the intermixture between ethnic identity and competition for control of natural resources as factors driving conflicts':

The South Pacific region is amazingly diverse in ethno-linguistic terms ... Divisions between language group, clan and region ... are increasingly coming to the fore as sources of ethnic conflict, just as it is the tensions between the Zulus and Xhosa in South Africa, Ndebele and Shona in Zimbabwe, north and south in Mozambique and so on that form the real issue of conflict in many parts of Africa. Despite its much more fragmented nature, ethnicity in the South Pacific remains similar to that of Africa: an easily manipulable and combustible resource which is being increasingly exploited for political success.³⁶

Investigating these three cases of African 'ethnic' conflict, in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, suggests that ethnic tensions were not, as argued, the 'real issue of conflict', and that the quest for primordial racial similarities between the two regions is misguided.

First, clashes in the Natal townships in the early 1990s were largely between pro-Inkatha Zulus and Zulus who backed the ANC and UDP, not between Zulu and Xhosa. When Nelson Mandela was released from prison and the ANC was legalised in 1990, the South African government armed Zulus with the aim of destabilising the ANC and United Democratic Party (UDP). Many urbanised Zulus, however, were trade union members and backers of the UDP. 'Ideas of Zuluness ... only became strong as the

conflict continued', concludes Ross, arguing that at root 'it was a struggle for political territory. The UDP potentially threatened Inkatha control over KwaZulu, and thereby endangered not merely the political position of the leaders, but also the sources of their patronage system'.³⁷ The view that 'tribal' hostility between Xhosas and Zulus was responsible for violence between the ANC and Inkatha has been described as 'absurdly reductionist'.³⁸

Second, Zimbabwe's two national liberation movements – ZANU(PF) and ZAPU – were rooted, respectively, in the majority Shona and minority Ndebele groups. ZANU(PF)'s victory in 1980, and a subsequent rising in Matabeleland, was followed by massacres by the army's Fifth Brigade in the ZAPU-supporting areas of Matabeleland during 1982–88.³⁹ The Unity Accord of 1988, however, incorporated ZAPU and ZANU(PF) into a *de facto* one-party state, and former ZAPU officials filled posts in the local hierarchy throughout Matabeleland, including the position of governor.

Contemporary conflict is not primarily between Shona and Ndebele, but between ZANU(PF) and the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Although primarily urban-based, the MDC has extensive support in Matabeleland and in parts of the Midlands and Manicaland. ZANU(PF)'s strategy in the run-up to the presidential elections of 2002 was to forge an alliance with the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans' Association (ZNLWVA), an organisation representing former guerrillas, to exploit popular grievances over land. In Matabeleland, the ZNLWVA comprised mainly former ZAPU-supporting fighters. Poor administration and corruption within regional authorities became a focus of ZNLWVA attacks on the public service. Ironically, ZANU(PF)'s reliance on the war veterans to undermine MDC support had the effect in Matabeleland of forcing a significant number of Shona speakers out of their jobs. War veterans played on the 'central grievance against the local state all over Matabeleland, ... the perception that "outsiders" (i.e., Shona people, in particular) have privileged access to public sector jobs, and local Ndebele, Tonga or others are discriminated against'.⁴⁰ Clearly, Shona–Ndebele ethnic tensions played their part, but ZANU(PF)'s struggle to stay in power was so much more significant that it was even willing, indirectly, to exploit local anti-Shona sentiment to achieve this objective. Far from being a repeat of the 1980s ZANU(PF)-inspired Ndebele massacres, some of the war veterans were 'once themselves the victims of the Zanu(PF) repression they are now repeating'.⁴¹

Third, Mozambique's Renamo was an invention of the Rhodesian and then South African security services, but proved able, eventually, to acquire a Mozambican reality, particularly among the increasingly marginalised

elites and ethnically heterogeneous groups in and around the Zambezi Valley area. Renamo unexpectedly captured 40 per cent of the vote at the 1994 elections, with strongest support in these central provinces. Although scholarly analysis of Mozambican conflict has increasingly emphasised this hitherto neglected regional aspect,⁴² this has not been accompanied by extravagant claims that it formed the fundamental cause of the war. As Minter writes,

In Mozambique it is simply not plausible that a coherent military organisation such as Renamo could have emerged without external initiative ... war came from outside. Once it started a variety of internal factors fed into the conflict, but they did not become responsible for continuing the war. Ethnic and regional tensions, while they existed, did not divide Mozambicans so deeply as to have sustained a war on these grounds.⁴³

Nor can Mozambique's tensions be construed as reflecting a clear north-south ethnic divide. Frelimo's pan-Mozambican nationalism may have served as a vehicle for southern regionalism (or an expression of Shangaan, Ronga or Tsua ethnic aspirations) and articulated the ascendancy of the new urban elites of the Maputo region, who remain closely integrated with the neighbouring South African economy. But it was never exclusively a southern-based organisation, as shown, for example, by studies of the nationwide distribution of its vote in the 1994 elections and its ability to win elections in Cabo Delgado province in the country's far north.⁴⁴

Independent Africa's insurgencies include a wide range of different movements – secessionist struggles (e.g. Eritrea, Katanga, Biafra and, at times, Southern Sudan), reform movements (e.g. Uganda, Rwanda) and warlord insurgencies (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Chad, Somalia, Angola, Mozambique, DRC).⁴⁵ Conflicts occurred in linguistically homogenous clan-based states like Somalia, as well as ethnically diverse states such as DRC. Despite a dreadful prevalence, they did not engulf the whole of Africa. Hence, there is no generic or unitary 'African' phenomenon as regards the ethnic basis of insurgent movements that can usefully be rediscovered amidst the turbulent waters of the Pacific. As Chege writes:

no-one suggests that violence in Sri Lanka or the depravity of the Khmer Rouge reflect an 'Asian' cultural affliction. Yet, according to the conventional wisdom of all-Africa catastrophe studies, the shocking human mutilation and senseless carnage of Sierra Leone and Liberian warlords are all symptomatic of 'Africa' in chaos.⁴⁶

GREED AND GRIEVANCE

The claim that 'ethnicity in the South Pacific remains similar to that in Africa' rests on an emphasis on its primordial quality – the 'coming to the fore' of 'divisions between language group, clan and region'. However, Reilly also embraces the alternative interpretation that ethnic conflicts are little more than a smokescreen concealing struggles for control of resources.

The centrality of exploitable resources to many apparently 'ethnic' conflicts has not yet been sufficiently appreciated by commentators on the South Pacific, many of whom too readily accept ethnic explanations for what are, in reality, power struggles over control of resources and control of the state.⁴⁷

In Africa, the best known examples of such resource-driven conflicts are the struggle for diamonds in Sierra Leone, copper and diamonds in DR Congo and oil by Angola's government, diamonds by UNITA.⁴⁸ Yet nowhere in the Pacific have rebel movements successfully wrested control of such primary resources, or financed themselves in this way. Bougainville landowners closed the Panguna Copper Mine, while the IFM–MEF struggles shut down the palm oil plantations on Guadalcanal and the Gold Ridge mine, with devastating results for that country's economy. The tropical timber industry did not play 'an important role' in the 'resort to violence' in the Solomon Islands,⁴⁹ although financial mismanagement and corruption during the round log export boom of the 1990s seriously weakened the central government.⁵⁰ Prior to the Fiji putsch, George Speight was involved in a potentially lucrative deal to sell off Fiji's harvestable mahogany stands to a US concern, but the incoming People's Coalition government ditched the deal and removed him as chair of the Hardwood Corporation.⁵¹ This, perhaps, helps to explain Speight's personal motivation in seeking to dislodge the government, but it scarcely accounts for broader indigenous Fijian backing for the attempted coup.

Reilly's argument that civil war is largely driven by 'predatorial activity', rather than by reactions to inequality or ethnic oppression, relies upon the World Bank investigations undertaken by Collier and Hoeffler.⁵² Their model used 98 countries, 27 of which experienced at least one civil war during 1965–95, with civil war defined as a conflict yielding at least 1,000 casualties. Using multivariable regression analysis, they found a country to be more vulnerable if it has (i) low GDP per capita, (ii) a high share of primary exports in GDP, (iii) a large population and (iv) neither complete ethno-linguistic homogeneity nor a high degree of fractionalisation. In a later paper, Collier also found that the likelihood of civil war was increased by (v) low educational participation, (vi) rapid population growth and (vii) large

overseas diasporas.⁵³ Neglecting issue (iv), Reilly concludes that 'with the exception of large diaspora communities, all of these phenomena are strongly present in much of the Pacific region, suggesting a serious risk of increasing internal conflicts in the years ahead'.⁵⁴

In most respects, the Pacific Island states are closer to the Collier–Hoeffler 'ideal society' model than what they describe as its 'catastrophically endowed' counterpart. Most are in the upper-medium ranks in terms of GDP per capita, have small populations and are either ethno-linguistically highly homogenous (most of Polynesia and Micronesia) or highly diverse (most of Melanesia). The most acute Collier–Hoeffler risk factor is the share of primary exports in GDP (a proxy for natural resource endowment), held to be an indicator of the potential 'gains to rebellion'. Fiji, PNG and the Solomon Islands have relatively high primary export/GDP ratios, but the Polynesian and Micronesian states, with the exception of once phosphate-rich Nauru, have low ratios. Pacific instability is, hardly surprisingly, usually witnessed in countries that have poor education and rapid population growth, although Fiji has relatively strong educational capacities and low population growth. Many Polynesian and Micronesian countries in fact have huge external diaspora communities, if measured relative to domestic populations, although out-migration is more frequently viewed as a safety-valve, helping to account for greater stability in Polynesia and Micronesia as compared to western Melanesia.⁵⁵

More puzzling, perhaps, is the Collier–Hoeffler finding of a negative correlation between ethnic diversity and civil war. 'Ethnic and religious diversity does not make a society more dangerous', argues Collier, 'in fact, it makes it safer'.⁵⁶ Reilly neglects this issue in the Africanisation paper, which highlights the conflict-engendering potential of Pacific ethnic conflict 'despite its much more fragmented nature'. Yet he draws a very different conclusion in a separate paper, published at around the same time, where the objective is to emphasise the likelihood of democratic continuity in highly ethnically diverse states. This argues that in PNG 'a high level of ethnic fragmentation can actually help democratic consolidation' on the grounds that this 'simply overwhelms any possibility of a single ethnic group dominating'.⁵⁷ In that context, Reilly draws on the following remarks by Kenyan scholar, Ali Mazrui, who visited PNG in the early 1970s.

The worst troubles we have had in Africa have been in countries with very big tribes competing with each other ... To this extent, one of Papua New Guinea's greatest assets may well be its acute ethnic fragmentation. Small ethnic groups may fight each other, but because there are so many their conflicts may remain localized. They need not shake the nation to its very core, as did the tensions between big ethnic giants in Nigeria, the Congo, Kenya and Uganda.⁵⁸

This latter type of conclusion is also supported by Saffu and May in the context of their discussion of the potential for a PNGDF coup, by Horowitz in his broader investigation of worldwide ethnic conflict and by Fry in his comparison of the Fiji and Solomon Islands crises.⁵⁹

INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNANCE

Do both Africa and the Pacific Islands suffer from a common 'weakness of basic institutions of governance, such as prime ministers, parliaments and, especially, political parties'?

In terms of democratic continuity, most independent Pacific Island states have been models of constitutional stability. Samoa has sustained continued democratic rule for 42 years, the Cook Islands for 39 years, Niue for 36 years, Nauru for 36 years, Tuvalu for 26 years, Kiribati for 25 years, the Marshall Islands and FSM for 18 years, Palau for 11 years, Vanuatu for 24 years and PNG for 29 years. Fiji had 17 years of constitutional rule until the 1987 coup, while the Solomon Islands witnessed 22 years of unbroken democratic governments until June 2000. Fiji's 1987 coup was followed by the introduction of a new constitution in 1990, which reserved the premiership for ethnic Fijians and stacked parliamentary seat distribution against the Indo-Fijians. Yet, by the mid-1990s, coup leader Sitiveni Rabuka had embarked on a process of constitutional reform that, in 1997, reversed those discriminatory provisions.⁶⁰ After the 2000 coups in Fiji and the Solomon Islands, both countries swiftly reverted to constitutional rule, holding elections that were taken as 'free and fair' by Commonwealth observers in late 2001.⁶¹ Most Pacific countries have a relatively free press, more or less independent judiciaries and, despite some glaring irregularities, few examples of overtly rigged elections. Elections have normally occurred at constitutionally specified intervals, and there have been frequent regime transitions.

By contrast, truly competitive elections and democratic regime transitions have proved rare in Africa. A study of a sample of 101 cases of political succession in Africa between 1963 and 1987 found that 57 per cent of incoming leaders secured office due to military appointments, 31 per cent were designated by civilian incumbents and only eight per cent rose to power through direct election.⁶² By 1989, 29 African countries were governed under some kind of single-party rule, and opposition parties were illegal in 32 states.⁶³ Incumbent leaders were more regularly supplanted after 1990, although nearly half of Africa's 1990 leaders managed to reinvent themselves as 'democratic' leaders by neutralising the opposition, electoral irregularities or changing constitutional rules.⁶⁴ This experience was not the result of having been 'saddled with ill-conceived imitations of Western political institutions',⁶⁵ an interpretation which has anyway been

contested historically.⁶⁶ In Africa, inherited colonial institutions were frequently rapidly dismantled, and replaced with new constitutions, often involving forms of presidential rule.⁶⁷

Both PNG and the Solomon Islands have witnessed extraordinarily fractionalised voting patterns, high MP turnover and relatively weak governments, features which Reilly takes as further indications of the region's 'Africanisation'. Under their first-past-the-post systems, candidates regularly secure office with less than 50 per cent of the vote owing to highly localised allegiances and split votes. Incumbents often fail to secure re-election. Inside parliament, MPs frequently shift allegiances and bring down governments in no confidence votes. For example, in 1995, companies are reported to have bribed ministers to cross the floor in the hope of dislodging the Solomon Islands government after it tried to regulate the country's logging industry.⁶⁸ Both PNG and the Solomon Islands had ten different governments and seven different prime ministers between independence (respectively in 1975 and 1978) and 2002.⁶⁹

Conversely, African leaders tended to remain in power considerably longer than those in Asia or Latin America,⁷⁰ let alone those in the Pacific. In the 106 African presidential elections held between independence and 1989, victors on average received a reported 92 per cent of the vote. In the 185 direct parliamentary elections over the same period, winning parties obtained on average 83 per cent of the vote and 88 per cent of seats. Only in 11 of those elections did winning parties fail to secure a majority of seats, and, of these, in nine cases the parliament was illegally dissolved shortly afterwards.⁷¹ Western Melanesia's high level of incumbent turnover, highly localised candidate support bases and considerable numbers of independent MPs were not features of the African political scene.

Nor is PNG a 'good example' of developments across the Pacific, with political parties everywhere becoming 'fragmented, amorphous and increasingly irrelevant'.⁷² Fiji, New Caledonia and Vanuatu have strongly party-centred systems and independents secure only a small share of the vote. In most of Micronesia, party-based systems have never formed, although the Marshall Islands possesses an initially non-partisan system becoming increasingly polarised along party lines.⁷³ No confidence votes have been a regular feature in PNG, the Solomon Islands, Nauru and Vanuatu, but Samoa and Kiribati have both had only a single successful no confidence vote since independence. Other than in the neighbouring Solomon Islands, PNG-style candidate proliferation and split voting patterns are not features in any other Pacific state. The extent of regime stability, the degree of localisation of electoral loyalties and the chances of re-election for MPs differ markedly across the Pacific, but everywhere the situation is quite distinct from that in Africa.

CENTRALITY OF THE STATE

Across the South Pacific region, and particularly in Melanesia, access to the state is a (perhaps *the*) crucial determinant of economic success, as the state, not the market, is itself the primary instrument of accumulation of resources such as foreign aid and domestic revenue.⁷⁴

For Reilly, the 'centrality of the state' is judged by its accumulation of revenue, although no data are provided to demonstrate that either the Pacific Islands or Africa are particularly high revenue collectors or that their states' acquisition of revenue has been increasing over time. According to World Bank data, sub-Saharan African states secure (including grant aid), on average, approximately 28.2 per cent of GDP as central government current revenue, as compared to a 32.2 per cent European Union average.⁷⁵ The picture in both Africa and the Pacific is highly varied. Some sub-Saharan countries with relatively high GDP per capita, such as Botswana and South Africa, have proved able to sustain relatively high state revenue/GDP ratios, while civil war-afflicted states, such as DRC and Sierra Leone, witnessed severe secular falls in state revenue-collecting capacity. Governments virtually disappeared in some states (Somalia, Liberia), while in other cases their geographical writ became highly limited (Angola, Mozambique, DRC). In parts of West Africa, DRC and Angola, 'shadow states' have emerged, with warlords controlling distinct regions via direct links with foreign corporations and so curtailing the reach of the official state.⁷⁶

In both Africa and the Pacific, the most pronounced phase of 'increased state centrality' in fact tended to precede or accompany decolonisation.⁷⁷ In the run-up to independence, colonial authorities expanded aid financing of infrastructure, education, health and housing. Third World 'take-offs' were to be triggered by supplementing low developing country 'savings ratios'. Since independence, state revenue has tended to remain relatively constant in real terms, or fall under the influence of structural adjustment programmes. Average sub-Saharan non-grant current revenue remained relatively flat as a share of GDP across 1972–98, while grant aid rose slightly relative to gross national income over 1983–94 and fell back thereafter. In the Pacific, Fiji and Samoa proved able to raise government revenue during the 1990s, but both the Solomon Islands and PNG have witnessed falls in state revenue/GDP ratios since independence.

In the African literature, the state is frequently viewed as subject to two distinct influences, the first of which helps to explain perceptions of increasing state centrality. The deeply personalised character of state–society interactions (and their departure from the classical Weberian rational-legal-bureaucratic ideal type) is seen as generating motives for state expansion.⁷⁸ Incentives exist for African rulers to increase cabinet and

parliament size, while expanding government employment enlarges the scope for job-handouts. Public sector employment in Kenya and Ghana, for example, amounts respectively to 75 per cent and 50 per cent of formal employment, and the ratio of wage to non-wage expenditure by African governments is twice that in Asia.⁷⁹ Conversely, pervasive patron-client relations may ultimately curtail the reach of the state. Fiscal studies have found, for example, that exemptions granted by government and tax fraud led to a fall in state revenue in the Cameroons by 18–22 per cent, that tax evasion lessened Gambia's government revenue by 70 per cent and that top-level corruption ensured a loss of Nigerian oil revenues amounting to perhaps ten per cent of GDP per annum.⁸⁰ Tax breaks, duty remissions and transfer pricing in the Solomon Islands logging industry have led to similar falls in government revenue.⁸¹

Increasing formal centrality of the state may also encourage a retreat into informal self-sufficient agriculture, particularly in fertile and less densely populated regions in parts of Melanesia or tropical Africa. In those hinterlands, people could rely on subsistence farming with minimal connections either with the state or market-driven activity, artificially magnifying the formal centrality of the state. The African peasantry was 'uncaptured', in Goran Hyden's words, because in the context of rain-fed subsistence agriculture, minimally integrated into the cash economy, 'the state does not really enter into the solution of [the peasant's] existential problems' and there exists 'a definite limit ... to how far enforcement of state policies can go'.⁸² Scope for such shifts are still greater in subsistence-based rural Melanesia, where the majority of the population remain self-subsistent cultivators (PNG, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands). Where access to cherished state-run educational or health facilities proves too costly or unfavourably skewed along ethnic lines, the 'lame leviathan' can be bypassed by a retreat into village-based self-sufficiency.⁸³

There exists less scope for such shifts in relatively resource-poor Polynesia and Micronesia, where state revenue is in fact considerably higher as a percentage of GDP than in Melanesia and export-oriented private sector activity tends to be weaker. In these countries, a large part of state revenue derives from aid – compacts of free association with the US (Palau, FSM and the Marshall Islands), French assistance (French Polynesia) or a combination of antipodean and multilateral aid (Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, Samoa, Tonga, Kiribati, Tuvalu). Outer islands have frequently remained disadvantaged, triggering large-scale movements towards metropolitan centres, such as Tarawa (Kiribati), Funafuti (Tuvalu) or Majuro (Marshall Islands). In these countries, the state has indeed been the critical agent of economic development, whereas in post-colonial Melanesia it has generally been poorly articulated with its hinterlands. The

1998–99 Isatabu uprising in the Solomons, for example, was led by youths from Guadalcanal's remote and inaccessible Weather Coast, a notoriously neglected and undeveloped region.

THE COMING ANARCHY?

Perhaps the popularity of the 'Africanisation' thesis in the wake of the 2000 crises is best understood figuratively, rather than literally, with the Pacific (and South-East Asia) playing a similar role in the Australian imagination to that of Africa in Europe. Antipodean fears about African-style instability in a Pacific backyard are nothing new.⁸⁴ Whereas the previous focus was on economic weakness and structural adjustment programmes, today's doomsdayists tend to emphasise governance reform. Bleak economic conclusions still feature, although we found that the parallels with African standards of living were largely unfounded, and that only parts of Melanesia have HDI indicators close to sub-Saharan levels. Afro-Pacific catastrophism centred, above all, on claimed similarities between ethnic tensions in the Pacific and Africa, although these claims were empirically weak and ill-informed. The use of the World Bank's model predicting civil war to anticipate major conflict in the Pacific was found to be highly selective, and the treatment of the crisis-threatening or -abating role of PNG's ethnic diversity was inconsistent. Explicit African parallels vanished in the discussion of high Pacific regime turnover, fractionalisation of electoral support and the position of the state. Implicitly, the demonstration of 'failure' – meaning democratic weakness or excessive state size – was deemed sufficient evidence of an authentically 'African' content.

Ultimately, the test of solid comparative politics is its explanatory power, and perhaps also whether a body of scholarly analysis from one region can be usefully employed to identify hitherto neglected phenomena in another. It would be foolish to deny all similarities between, and within, the two regions or to repudiate usage of comparative methodology. The relative wealth of empirical and theoretical work on Africa can surely yield important insights for Pacific specialists.

At the level of external perception, some historical comparability between Melanesia and black Africa is implied by their common position in the colonial imagination; Africa derives from the Latin *affer*, meaning black, while Melanesia derives from the Greek, *melas*, also meaning black.⁸⁵ The highpoint of the late nineteenth century 'scramble for Africa' coincided with the peak of the imperial carve-up of the Pacific, often involving the same colonial powers and interlinked diplomatic deals. Fiji governor Arthur Gordon's experiments with the 'Fijian administration' precede Lord Lugard's 'indirect rule' in Nigeria, although British rule in India also had its

local proxies. Organisation of the colonial division of labour in plantations and policing along ethnic lines had an enduring impact in both regions, and colonial officials regularly circulated from African to Pacific posts and vice versa. As in Africa, the Pacific territories were largely decolonised in the post-World War Two years, often, but particularly in the Pacific, at the whim of the departing colonial power rather than in response to disciplined anti-colonial movements. In both regions, relatively strong post-independence leaders initially emerged, focused on nation-building and economic development, eventually giving way to a much more volatile political situation. Decolonisation unleashed popular aspirations and optimism about the prospects for the future that, in both regions, but particularly in Africa, were profoundly disappointed.

At independence, both regions still had a sizeable smallholder peasantry, only tentatively linked with the cash economy. Highly unevenly developed formal sectors were overshadowed by relatively substantial state structures, although these were largely a legacy of colonial rule rather than a product of the post-independence period. Different ethnic or regional groups tended to obtain distinct positions in the colonial division of labour, or acquire specific experiences in terms of educational advancement, religious affiliation or status recognition, which proved a potent influence over which a particular elite successfully positioned itself to assume power after decolonisation. Democratic reform and universal suffrage were in most cases departing gestures by the imperial power. Although absolute levels of GDP per capita were considerably higher in the Pacific, many countries in both regions experienced very slow or even negative per capita GDP growth in the post-colonial era. The state, which had been a remote presence under colonial rule, became much more personalised and faction-ridden in the hands of local elites.⁸⁶ Without embracing a narrowly 'externalist' interpretation of post-colonial difficulties, governments in both regions were strongly influenced by the changing fads and fantasies about structural reform emanating from the Bretton Woods institutions. In both regions those reforms had, at best, very uneven success.

Turning to the figurative interpretation, what are the real prospects for future civil conflict amidst the Pacific Islands? Although the proximity in timing between the Fiji and Solomon Islands political crises, as well as the media's 'copy-cat' response and propensity for analogy-based explanation, encouraged usage of comparative methods, there has as yet been little detailed analysis of the specific underlying causes of Melanesian frictions. As a more general rule, stronger comparative approaches would tend to *follow* detailed investigations of what distinguishes the two situations. Is the Fiji experience likely to be replicated across the Pacific? Leaving aside the indigene-settler cleavages of Fiji and New Caledonia, are Solomon Islands-

style 'conflicts between established local populations and internal migrants from adjacent islands', as Reilly argues, 'likely to become more common in the future'?⁸⁷

Fiji's tensions are unique by African as well as Pacific standards. Fijians and Indo-Fijians seldom intermarry, they have different religions and tend to back dissimilar, ethnically identified, parties. Indo-Fijians are 95 per cent Hindu or Muslim, ethnic Fijians are 99 per cent Christian. The two groups are spatially integrated, albeit with regional imbalances, but not socially assimilated. The country has switched since independence from being a majority Indo-Fijian nation to one with a 54 per cent majority indigenous Fijian and 40 per cent minority Indo-Fijian community. Constitutional crises (1977) or coups (1987, 2000) have in each case followed election victories by political parties largely reliant on the Indo-Fijian vote. Each crisis has ended with a reassertion of ethnic Fijian dominance, justified by elite claims that 'indigenous paramountcy' is the authentic basis of the country's governance and by the ideology of *i-taukei* versus *vulagi* ('owner of the soil' against 'foreigner'),⁸⁸ a doctrine which informs a system of 'affirmative action' that resembles Malaysia's *Bumiputra* system to a greater degree than anything found in Africa.

Within civil society, relations between the two communities are otherwise relatively cordial. Contrary to the rather superficial parallel with Idi Amin's ejection of Uganda's Asians, the predominant focus of mainstream Fijian opinion has been to contest political rights, not commercial or citizenship rights. Uganda's one per cent Asian population was expelled in 1972, whereas approximately one-quarter of the once majority Fiji Indians voluntarily migrated, albeit under political duress, in the wake of the 1987 coup. That outward migration may also ultimately transform the political landscape, if underlying demographic shifts remove the perception of electoral contests as battles for ethnic control of the state. The other major focus of Indo-Fijian/ethnic Fijian controversy has been over the terms surrounding the leasing of Fijian native lands. Thousands of Indo-Fijian farmers were evicted after the expiry of their leases on native lands during 1997–2001. Yet this was largely a legacy of the British colonial decision to declare 83 per cent of the country's total land area inalienable and to politicise the leasing issue by providing for block renewal of tenancies on native land by statute. Reilly compares the Fiji situation to Robert Mugabe's forcible eviction of white farmers. However, in Zimbabwe controversial white private land ownership of farmlands was not challenged at independence owing to fears of consequent economic destabilisation.⁸⁹ More recently, Mugabe sought renewed popularity, and re-election, by encouraging popular ZNLWVA expropriation of white farmers. In Fiji, freehold land ownership has never been much of an issue at the level of

national politics, despite clearly contentious land sales in the run-up to British colonisation in 1874.

Fiji is exceptional in Oceania in having a bipolar division between two relatively homogenous ethnic groups. New Caledonia and West Papua are quasi-bipolar, in the sense that their Melanesian populations are highly diverse, but clearly distinct from the immigrant or migrant-descendant communities. Conversely, PNG, with perhaps 832 distinct living languages, is the most ethnically diverse state on the planet, while Vanuatu, with approximately 109 languages, has the highest number of languages relative to population in the world.⁹⁰ Most of the Polynesian countries are relatively ethnically or linguistically homogeneous, with the exception of French Polynesia, with its 11 per cent white population, and Hawaii and New Zealand, where settlers demographically overwhelmed indigenous Polynesian populations. Political cleavages in the independent Polynesian and Micronesian states tend to revolve around quite different and less disruptive tensions; between different islands or island groups, between peripheral outer islands and the metropolis, or between factions allied in terms of religious or schooling differences, personality-specific alignments or chiefly rivalries.

One valuable lesson from the African experience is that, while 'big ethnic giants' do not spring up overnight, changes do occur in the perceptions of politicised ethnicity. Africa's 'invented traditions' include emergent ideologies of ethnic solidarity amidst previously disunited acephalous groups, fragmentation of once-robust ethnic giants along sub-ethnic lines and the fusing together of previously distinct groups for political advantage. Arguably, the formation of ethnic blocs in Africa is even more fluid than in the contemporary Pacific, although Africa, too, has some more durable divisions and Melanesia exhibits greater flexibility than Polynesia.⁹¹ Rigid or primordially based concepts of immutable ethnic difference may not be of much assistance in identifying the potential, or otherwise, for conflict in Melanesia.

Both the Bougainville and Solomon Islands conflicts did not involve strictly ethnic groups, if, following Esman, by 'ethnic' one means groups that share a common language, distinctive customs or perception of a common destiny.⁹² Bougainville has a patchwork quilt of differing ethno-linguistic and kinship-based groups, with some history of violent conflict between more cosmopolitan coastal peoples and more insular mountain-dwelling groups and amongst the hill peoples themselves. Yet a Bougainvillean identity had nevertheless emerged even before independence and intensified during the 1989–98 conflict, even if support for the BRA was weaker in the northern part of the island and conflict among Bougainvilleans remained a marked feature.⁹³ New Caledonia's 44

per cent Kanak population is sub-divided into perhaps 32 separate ethno-linguistic groups, but Kanaks from many groups nevertheless lent support to a militant independence movement in the mid-1980s. West Papuans comprise a highly divided *mélange* of perhaps 263 distinct ethno-linguistic groups, but the trans-ethnic Movement for Free Papua (OPM) has nonetheless conducted a sporadic guerrilla war against Indonesia's armed forces since the 1960s. Despite Papua New Guinea's ethnic multiplicity, groups in urban areas have coalesced around differences between 'Highlanders' and 'Papuans'.

Similarly, the Solomon Islands conflict was not strictly along ethnic lines. Malaita has at least ten distinct languages, while Guadalcanal possesses at least six,⁹⁴ with both islands exhibiting a high degree of dialectal variation. Both the MEF and IFM were supra-ethnic organisations, although they retained ethnic or regional-based sub-divisions, and internal feuds in the aftermath of the Townsville agreement were frequently along ethnic lines. Island-wide identities did not spring up overnight. Both had precedents. The Maasina Ruru movement emerged during 1944–52 on Malaita and spread to other islands, until suppressed by the British authorities and its leaders incarcerated. The Moro movement surfaced on Guadalcanal's Weather Coast in the late 1950s and spread across the island. It was clearly hostile to the separatist aspirations of Malaitan settlers in the Marau Sound area (eastern Guadalcanal), but also rejected the colonial 'waste lands' policy and expressed concern that 'the boundaries of the land of Honiara [are] still moving into the lands of the natives'.⁹⁵ The term 'Isatabu', adopted by the IFM militias in place of the Spanish-bequeathed word 'Guadalcanal', was inherited from the Moro movement, and many of the mainland Malaitan settlers in the Marau Sound area were evicted by the IFM, despite generations old settlement and relatively frequent intermarriage. Ethnic fragmentation did not, in itself, preclude the emergence of island-wide insurgent movements.

Difficulties in the Solomon Islands possess greater similarities to those witnessed elsewhere in Melanesia than do those in Fiji. Low per capita GDP, high population growth rates and rapid urbanisation are characteristics also of PNG and Vanuatu. For all three countries, the growth of formal employment proved way too small to soak up the annual flow of school leavers.⁹⁶ Urbanised unemployed and disenchanted youth, pushed out of the school system and often engaged in criminal activity (*liu*), provided willing recruits for the IFM and MEF. Similar footloose urbanised groups exist in Vanuatu and PNG (Vanuatu's *sperem publik rod* – literally, 'roaming the streets' – and PNG's *pasindia* – literally, 'passengers').⁹⁷

In other respects, the catalysts behind the Solomon Islands crisis were specific to that country. First, resentment against non-indigene

preponderance in the capital, Honiara, was particularly intense on Guadalcanal. Even in the 1960s, Belshaw could contrast the 'organic unity' of Fiji's capital, Suva, with the 'artificial' character of Honiara, correctly predicting that it was 'unlikely that Honiara will eventually duplicate the Suva pattern'.⁹⁸ Writing in 1970, Bellam had noted 'the ambivalent attitude towards Honiara of indigenes, many of whom seem to regard it as an alien community in which the interests of non-indigenes are paramount'. He explained this as a result of the

generally parasitic ... effect of Honiara on the rest of the protectorate. Although improved road communications in northern Guadalcanal have articulated the capital with its immediate hinterland much more than had been the case previously, this has primarily benefited and stimulated expatriate enterprise. As yet Honiara has had only relatively limited catalytic effect on village Guadalcanal ... Indigenous identification with, and commitment to, the capital remains marginal.⁹⁹

By 1986, 72 per cent of Honiara's population were inter-island migrants, with Malaitans forming easily the largest settler group. Only 4.6 per cent of the town's inhabitants were first-generation indigenous Guales.¹⁰⁰ Squatter settlements mushroomed around the town and its outskirts, encroaching onto indigenous customary lands. Inward migration to Pacific urban centres has also prompted landowner grievances elsewhere, as in Vanuatu's Port Vila or even Fiji's Suva. Yet nowhere have those grievances proved as explosive as on Guadalcanal.

The Guadalcanal situation was also rare in another sense. Although sizeable internal migrations have occurred in many parts of the post-colonial Pacific, these are more frequently from outer islands to the capital or other metropolitan centres, such as Ebeye near the American base on Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands. Malaitan migration to the Guadalcanal plains, the country's sole large tract of arable land, was an atypical case of large-scale rural-rural migration.¹⁰¹ Indonesian transmigration to West Papua has also involved considerable settlement of rural areas and, notably, has produced the most protracted conflict in the region. The influx of New Guineans from the mainland and other islands connected with the commencement of the Panguna mining operations, among other factors, strengthened resistance on Bougainville. Rural agricultural or mining projects also attracted settlers elsewhere in the Pacific, as for example to Fiji's Vatukoula or Seaqaqa, but these were on a much smaller scale and encountered little disruption.

Third, the crisis on Guadalcanal was extraordinarily predictable, and festered over decades against a backdrop of corrupt and disengaged

government. Demands for 'state government' and hostility to 'squatters', for example, were already major issues during the 1987 constitutional review.¹⁰² In this sense, it was ultimately government complacency, or the inability of the state to attain sufficient autonomy to regulate inter-island migration, that allowed the situation to get out of hand.

Finally, the suggestion that those Melanesian countries with high population growth rates are also those most at risk of civil conflict does not support Kaplan's Malthusian theory, cited at the start of this paper. Despite relatively high population growth rates, the north-western Melanesian countries are the relatively resource-rich parts of the Pacific region. Malthusian theories, to the extent that these have acquired any support at all, have been applied to the resource-poor atoll states, where population growth does encounter serious environmental limits.¹⁰³ None of those states, however, have experienced political disruptions of the type witnessed in parts of Melanesia. Nor is the suggestion that conditions exist for future instability in north-eastern Melanesia equivalent to the formation of an alternative 'Africanisation' thesis. Those areas where an African literature provides useful points of reference for Pacific analysts, particularly in investigations of the social composition of insurgent movements and of changes in the form of the post-colonial state, refer to phenomena that have also been identified in many other parts of the Third World.¹⁰⁴

NOTES

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103. C. Tisdell and T.I. Fairbairn, ‘Subsistence Economies and Unsustainable Development and Trade: Some Simple Theory’, *Journal of Development Studies*, 20/2 (1984), 227–41; T.I. Fairbairn and C. Tisdell, ‘Economic Growth among Small Pacific Countries: Can it be Sustained?’, Nagoya, Japan: United Nations Centre for Regional Development, 1983.
104. On the state, see, for example, H. Crouch, ‘Patrimonialism and Military Rule in Indonesia’, *World Politics*, 31 (1979), 242–58; P.D. Hutchcroft, ‘Oligarchs and Cronies in the Philippine State: The Politics of Patrimonial Plunder’, *World Politics*, 43/3 (1991), 414–50.