Major events: Solomon Islands

Year	Event
1893	British formally annex Solomon Islands
1945	Capital is moved from Tulagi to Honiara which attracts people seeking employment, most of whom are Malaitan
1945–53	Maasina Rule Movement unites Malaitans in anti-colonialism
1957	Moro Movement emerges on Weather Coast of Guadalcanal
1977	Western Breakaway Movement emerges demanding autonomy for western region
1978	Solomon Islands gains independence
1988	Guadalcanal people petition government demanding federal system of government and restrictions on internal migration
1989, 1996	Twice Malaitans demand, and are paid, compensation following swearing incidents and subsequent unrest in Honiara
1998	Guadalcanal militants commence campaign of violence and intimidation resulting in displacement of 35,000 settlers, mostly Malaitans
1999	First concerted attempt at peace negotiations culminates in signing of Honiara Accord in June; fighting continues between police and Guale militants
2000	Malaita Eagle Force forms 'Joint Operation' with some police and stages coup d'étât on 5 June; peace talks culminate in Townsville Peace Agreement (October)
2000–03	Lawlessness continues in Honiara, Malaita, Western Province, Weather Coast of Guadalcanal; ex-militant demobilization and rehabilitation schemes are corrupted; state becomes increasingly dysfunctional
2001	Elections (December); Sir Allan Kemakeza becomes prime minister
2003	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands deployed in July 2003; law and order is quickly restored
2007	Sogavare government is defeated in no-confidence motion (December); Derek Sikua becomes prime minister
2010	Elections take place (August); Danny Philip emerges as prime minister

5 Solomon Islands

From uprising to intervention

Matthew Allen and Sinclair Dinnen

There is nothing new about organized political violence in Solomon Islands, an independent archipelagic nation of around half a million people in the South West Pacific. There, and elsewhere in the geographical and cultural area known as Island Melanesia, violent conflict formed an intrinsic part of the pre-colonial social and spiritual milieu, and the boundaries between 'war' and 'peace' have continued to be blurry. In a story replicated across the region, endemic patterns of traditional warfare faded in the face of colonial pacification, which was itself a frequently violent encounter. The hegemony of the British was resisted to varying extents in different parts of the islands, most famously on the densely populated island of Malaita, where the post-World War II Maasina Rule Movement united the island's hitherto fragmented population under the banner of anti-colonialism. The post-colonial period has also seen periods of collective violence, most notably in the episodes of rioting, looting and 'ethnic tensions' that took place in the nation's capital, Honiara, in 1989 and again in 1996.

The violence that characterized parts of Solomon Islands between late 1998 and July 2003 – especially in the capital city, Honiara, and other areas of the island of Guadalcanal – exhibited elements of continuity with these previous patterns of violence. However, there were also important qualitative and quantitative differences that justify the conditional delineation of this period of 'conflict' from earlier and subsequent ones. It was the first time that large numbers of young men had organized themselves into well-armed militia-style groups that claimed to represent two of the nation's largest island-wide ethnicities, Malaita and Guadalcanal. The use of modern small armaments following the fracturing of the Royal Solomon Islands Police (RSIP) and the subsequent raiding of the nation's police armouries, was also unprecedented. Notwithstanding World War II, when the archipelago played host to a number of major land and sea battles between Japanese and American forces, the scale of the recent period of violence and its social, economic and human impacts were previously unknown in the history of Solomon Islands.[1]

Further precedents were established by the Australian-led regional response to the conflict, the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), which succeeded in rapidly restoring law and order after its initial deployment in July 2003. It was the first time that member states of the Pacific Islands Forum had

invoked the Biketawa Declaration to intervene in the affairs of another member state.[2] The initial military deployment was of a size that had not been seen in the region since World War II. The mission was also unprecedented in terms of Australian policy in relation to the South Pacific, marking a 'paradigm shift' in Australia's policy toward the region (Kampmark 2003) described by one observer as Australia's 'new interventionism' (Fry 2004).

While indigenous peoples mostly led the peace process that culminated in the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) of October 2000 and addressed some of the fundamental causes of the conflict, that process had a number of salient deficiencies. Despite these problems, the TPA did contribute to a diminution of the violence, bringing an end to the open fighting between rival militant groups. However, it also actively contributed to a transformation in the nature of the conflict – a transformation that was already in train before Townsville – which saw it become increasingly characterized by criminality and opportunism. The externally led peace initiative, RAMSI, was then overlain on this problematic and incomplete indigenous peace process and, to a significant extent, displaced it.

By arresting large numbers of ex-militants and recovering most of the guns, RAMSI was quickly able to restore law and order. However, we argue that RAMSI has been much less successful at addressing the underlying causes of the conflict that the indigenous peace process had been attempting to resolve, albeit in an imperfect way, before it was 'crowded out' by the intervention. We conclude by reflecting upon some of the lessons learned from the conflict in Solomon Islands and its diminution, including the ways in which the RAMSI intervention has slowly learned to become more responsive to local voices and agendas for peace building.

Background: From 'ethnic tension' to 'state failure'

The Guadalcanal rebellion[3]

What became known locally as 'the Tension' commenced in late 1998, when armed militias from Guadalcanal Island, who became known as the Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM), set about a violent campaign of harassment which saw the eviction of around 35,000 migrant settlers from their homes in the rural and peri-urban areas east and west of the Solomon Islands' capital, Honiara, most of whom originated from the densely populated island of Malaita. The uprising commenced shortly after a speech made by the then Premier of Guadalcanal, Ezekiel Alebua, in which he put a number of demands to the national government. These demands were later reiterated in January 1999, in a submission signed by the members of the Guadalcanal Provincial Assembly (titled *Demands by the Bone Fide and Indigenous People of Guadalcanal*). The keynote demand was for state government for Guadalcanal under a federal system of government, a demand that had previously been put to the national government in 1988 following demonstrations in Honiara.

Early efforts at conflict resolution by the government led by Prime Minister Bartholomew Ulufa'alu were largely ineffectual and became an important part of

the rationale for growing Malaitan militancy and subsequent emergence of a Malaitan ethnic militia, called the Malaitan Eagle Force (MEF), discussed later in the chapter. Prime Minister Ulufa'alu vacillated between attempts to mollify Guadalcanal grievances and outright dismissal of 'the Tension' as an Opposition conspiracy aimed at destabilizing his government (Fraenkel 2004). 'Law and order' responses proved counter-productive. As well as failing to halt the activities of the Guadalcanal militants, the over-representation of Malaitans in the Police force rendered police actions open to charges of ethnic bias.

While more conciliatory interventions conducted under the mantle of 'traditional' peacemaking acknowledged the broader grievances articulated by the Guadalcanal rebels, they ultimately fared little better. Detached from its traditional social moorings and increasingly monetized, the use of compensation as an instrument of peacekeeping became rapidly corrupted. Government responses were piecemeal and reactive, in part a response to unfolding events whose momentum was still building, but also a reflection of the diffuse character of the rebel movement. Agreements with one set of leaders appeared to have little effect on others, while the terms of such agreements were not widely disseminated.

In the face of these faltering efforts, the Commonwealth Secretariat dispatched former Fijian Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka in 1999 as special peace envoy. He held several meetings with Guadalcanal militants but was viewed with growing suspicion by Malaitans, not least after comparing the Guadalcanal grievances with the struggle for indigenous rights in Fiji (see Fraenkel, this volume). In contrast to the government, however, he successfully initiated dialogue with the militants and brokered several agreements, including the Honiara Peace Accord and the Panatina Agreement. However, these were not signed by all parties and failed to stem rebel activities and growing Malaitan frustration.

The resignation of two successive expatriate Police Commissioners left the increasingly divided police force without effective leadership. Australia and New Zealand, along with the UK, agreed to fund a small, unarmed Multinational Police Peace Monitoring Group to work alongside local police in monitoring peace agreements and collecting weapons. This modest intervention was constrained by its size, limited mandate, as well as by the deteriorating security situation and difficulties of accessing rural areas.

The emergence of the MEF, the coup, and the ceasefire

The MEF, which emerged in mid-1999, comprised Malaitan men who had been living on Guadalcanal before the start of the Tension or had travelled to Guadalcanal at the time from villages on Malaita. The MEF claimed to represent the interests of displaced Malaitans, and demanded substantial compensation for Malaitans killed by the IFM and for damage to their properties. With close links to the para-military Police Field Force (PFF), the MEF had access to high-powered weapons and started attacking and intimidating suspected IFM members and sympathizers. Clashes between the two militias increased with casualties on both sides. Ulufa'alu appealed in vain to Australia and New Zealand for armed assistance. In the absence

of any real powers of enforcement, the government resorted to further attempts at conciliation through payment of compensation to aggrieved parties.

On 5 June 2000, the MEF and elements of the PFF seized control of key installations in Honiara, including the well-stocked national armoury, justifying their actions on the grounds of the government's failure to resolve the conflict, loss of police control over security, and the need for a new prime minister. Ulufa'alu resigned and was replaced by the former opposition leader, Manasseh Sogavare. Following this *de facto* coup, acts of intimidation and reprisals against civilians in the national capital increased. Honiara was now under the control of a 'joint operation' between the MEF and what remained of the police. Fighting between the joint operation and the IFM intensified in the areas east and west of the capital and, in Honiara itself, government property was looted, vehicles were stolen and business houses intimidated.

Like Ulufa'alu, Sogavare attempted to conciliate by dispensing compensation for a range of grievances on both sides. The sheer number of potential claimants magnified the potential for abuse, as did the ability of armed thugs to intimidate government officials and others with impunity. Compensation payments were demanded routinely for participation in peace talks, leading one local commentator to speak of the 'chequebook' approach to peace negotiations (Wale 2001).

Australia and New Zealand renewed efforts to bring the rival militias to the negotiating table. This contributed to the signing of a Ceasefire Agreement in August 2000. The IFM and MEF were expected to lay down their arms and refrain from 'hostile, offensive, insulting or provocative behaviour' and both groups were to be restricted to different 'areas of influence' (Cease-fire Agreement 2000: 2). Despite its ethnic fracturing, the police force was to resume responsibility for law and order in the capital, while a Cease-fire Monitoring Council was established to monitor and enforce the terms of the Agreement. While bringing some short-term relief, serious breaches of the Agreement were soon being reported on both sides.

Various non-combatant groups stepped up their peace-making efforts. Women and church-based groups were prominent. The Honiara-based Peace Office of the Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA) provided strategic leadership and with donor assistance organized a National Peace Conference on board a New Zealand frigate. Participants came from throughout the Solomon Islands, representing churches, youth and women, traditional leaders, provincial officials, and the private sector. The ensuing communiqué demanded a greater role for civil society in peace negotiations and proposed that any amnesty provisions be linked to a truth and reconciliation process (Report of the National Peace Conference 2000: 7–8). MEF leaders summarily rejected these challenges to their control of the peace agenda. Further meetings between militia leaders in September resulted in agreement to hold substantive peace negotiations in Australia the following month.

The Townsville Peace Agreement and the instrumentalization of disorder

Australian and New Zealand governments facilitated a meeting of around 130 representatives of the militia groups, and provincial and national governments at an Australian military base in Townsville, North Queensland, in October 2000. Maverick Guadalcanal leader Harold Keke was absent; as were militia members from the Marau area of east Guadalcanal, who were scheduled to hold separate peace talks at a later date. Civil society organizations were deliberately excluded. Unlike the incrementally phased Bougainville peace process, involving a series of agreements negotiated over time (Regan 2010), the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) sought to achieve a comprehensive settlement over five days of intense negotiations facilitated by Australian and New Zealand officials.

Under the TPA's provisions, police personnel who had deserted or abused their positions to engage in militant activities could return to the force without fear of sanctions. A general amnesty was provided to ex-militants for criminal acts committed during the 'ethnic crisis', as well as for any civil liability arising from such acts. In return, they were to surrender all weapons and ammunition under the supervision of a small and unarmed International Peace Monitoring Team (IPMT). An indigenous Peace Monitoring Council was established 'to monitor, report on and enforce the terms of the agreement' (Townsville Peace Agreement 2000: 9–10). Former combatants were to be repatriated to their home villages and provided with counselling and rehabilitation services. The government was to seek international assistance to help recompense those who had suffered material loss as a result of the conflict.

While the TPA was a success in peace-making terms, helping to end fighting between the militias and averting the spectre of an all-out ethnic war, it also contributed to the instrumentalization of disorder and progressive paralysis of government that eventually led to the regional intervention. The institutionalization of compensation and other forms of monetary dispensation as redress for outstanding grievances raised unrealistic expectations on the part of thousands of people who had suffered loss as a result of the conflict, generated further divisions between claimants, and provided ample opportunity for corruption and abuse. Paying for the implementation of the TPA placed the government under enormous pressure to acquire funds from whatever sources it could access.

By the expiry of the 30-day deadline for surrendering weapons few of the estimated 500 high-powered weapons stolen from police armouries had been surrendered. The scheme to repatriate former militants was quickly corrupted, with many repatriated individuals returning to the capital to collect further payments. Schemes to absorb ex-militants often had counter-productive outcomes. Many were sworn in as special constables to assist in restoring order. Not only were special constables an additional drain on government resources, they also became a major source of crime and intimidation. Ministers, public servants, business people, and ordinary citizens complained of daily acts of harassment in the capital and the business of demanding compensation descended rapidly into criminal extortion. A violent feud between former Weather Coast militants led to a so-called joint operation comprising ex-IFM, ex-MEF and police in operations directed against the increasingly unpredictable Harold Keke, leader of the Guadalcanal Liberation Front (GLF) and his followers.

The Sogavare government negotiated a large commercial loan from a Taiwanese bank to fund the compensation payments.[4] Deputy Prime Minister Sir Allan

Kemakeza and his permanent secretary were sacked following revelations that they had allocated large payments to themselves for properties allegedly destroyed during the conflict. At the same time, the government was granting generous duty remissions and tax exemptions to selected individuals and businesses.

Widespread dismay greeted the announcement that Sir Allan Kemakeza had been elected by parliamentary ballot as Prime Minister following the national elections of December 2001. His administration included a number of MEF leaders, raising the spectre of deepening collusion between the new government and former militia elements. The new government failed badly in its pledge to restore law and order and revive the economy. The ill-fated operation of Solomon Islands police with former MEF and IFM militants and other armed elements to kill Harold Keke in mid-2002 led to the deaths of ten Malaitan gunmen. Keke's Weather Coast base became a no-go zone for people from other areas, and the activities of the joint operation fed a cycle of retributive violence with atrocities committed on both sides. A government minister was assassinated by Keke's followers in August, followed in April 2003 by the murders of six members of the Melanesian Brothers (a religious order of the Anglican Church). Kemakeza pleaded with Australia and New Zealand for armed intervention but this request was also declined.

Public debt had reached critical levels by the beginning of 2002, with rapidly diminishing foreign reserves (Dinnen 2002: 297). International financial institutions were unwilling to provide further funds until the government settled outstanding arrears. A variety of ill-conceived fundraising schemes were considered before being abandoned in the face of widespread opposition. By early 2003, it was clear that the Kemakeza government was simply incapable on its own of halting the deteriorating situation and that an external circuit breaker was necessary.

International intervention

Undertaken at the request of the Solomon Islands government and under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), the Australian-organized and -led RAMSI was deployed in July 2003. The mission initially assumed a traditional peace-keeping role, with around 1,800 military personnel providing security and logistical support to 330 police officers from PIF member states, and a smaller number of civilian advisers. Security was restored quickly and without bloodshed, a police presence was extended to other parts of the country, key militia leaders were arrested and many weapons were removed from the community.

The early successes of the intervention exceeded all expectations. Around 3,600 guns had been surrendered by the end of 2003, representing 90–95 per cent of the total estimated number of firearms in the community. By the beginning of 2005, more than 5,000 arrests had been made and approximately 7,300 charges laid. While most of those charged were ex-militants and former police officers, a number of ex-politicians, so-called 'big fish', were also prosecuted for Tension-related crimes. Around 25 per cent of the RSIP Force was removed.

The success also extended into the sphere of economic management, with the rapid stabilization of government finances and the balancing of the national

budget. Structural reforms implemented under RAMSI's economic governance and growth pillar have been credited with contributing to positive trends in foreign investment, export earnings, employment growth and overall GDP growth which has averaged around 7 per cent a year since 2004.

The causes and drivers of the conflict

As has been seen from the foregoing discussion, some of the violence, even prior to the TPA, was clearly motivated by greed and criminality. This is particularly true in the case of acts of theft and extortion, and was also seen in the corruption and abuse of the demobilization and rehabilitation schemes that took place after the TPA. Furthermore, as argued by Fraenkel (2004), the 'traditional' Melanesian practice of compensation was manipulated by political elites and militants, such that the process became increasingly fraudulent and corrupted (also see Dinnen 2002). The criminality framing of the conflict, which sees ex-militants and 'gangster' politicians perpetrating violence and disorder for their own pecuniary gain, resonates with the 'greed-not-grievance' thesis of developing-country conflict (for example, Collier and Hoeffler 1998, 2004). However, this perspective is more successful at explaining the changing dynamics and longevity of the conflict, as opposed to its underlying causes. While the conflict became increasingly criminalized over time, criminal or greed motives alone cannot account for its durability and certainly not its origins.

An important structural cause of the conflict was the spatial inequality in socioeconomic opportunities brought about by longstanding patterns of uneven development and, related to this, the migration of people from the densely populated and historically undeveloped island of Malaita to Honiara and the adjacent areas of rural Guadalcanal. Thrown together in increasing numbers, social and cultural differences between settlers and indigenous landowners were brought into stark relief. Guales (people from Guadalcanal) began to resent Malaitans' perceived domination of land and employment opportunities. Disputes also emerged within landowning groups themselves about the land transactions that had enabled Malaitans to settle on Guadalcanal in increasing numbers (Kabutaulaka 2001). These internecine disputes had a salient intergenerational dimension, reminiscent of the origins of the Bougainville conflict (Regan 2010: 19).

Relative deprivation was also an important grievance for many of the Guale militant leaders, most of whom originated from the remote and undeveloped Weather Coast of Guadalcanal. Many of these men were inspired by the conservationist ethos of the Moro Movement that has been active in the area since the late 1950s and is opposed to large-scale resource development projects such as gold mining. A number of scholars have pointed to the socially disruptive and disintegrative impacts of resource development projects on Guadalcanal as important causes of the Guale uprising (Kabutaulaka 2001; Naitoro 2000). An important dimension of Guale grievances concerning development on Guadalcanal is the belief that 'other' people, including the central government, have been reaping the

benefits of development, while Guales, particularly those on the Weather Coast, have been left to languish in relative disadvantage (see Allen 2007).

Other structural factors contributing to the conflict included the weakness and widely perceived illegitimacy of the post-colonial state; the ongoing strength of localism and regionalism, and corollary calls for greater devolution and provincial autonomy; the presence of relatively large numbers of poorly educated and under-employed young men in the population; and the chronic instability, and close ties with the notoriously corrupt logging industry, that have characterized national-level politics since Independence.

Proximate or triggering causes of the conflict included the role of unscrupulous political elites in exploiting grievances to manufacture ethnic conflict in pursuit of their own political and economic agendas (Fraenkel 2004); the disruption to political patronage networks engendered by the combined impact, in the late 1990s, of declining demand for Solomons log exports due to the Asian financial crisis and the subsequent donor-inspired, structural adjustment-style reform agenda of the Solomon Islands Alliance for Change (SIAC) government, which came to power in 1997 (Bennett 2000; Hameiri 2007); and the demonstration effects of the conflict in neighbouring Bougainville, particularly on the thinking of young Guale men (Kabutaulaka 2001).

Conflict diminution

The diminution of conflict in the case of Solomon Islands was brought about by a combination of an indigenous peace-making process that attempted to address some of the root causes of the conflict together with a subsequent regional intervention mission which internationalized the coercive functions of the state to dramatic effect. Full-scale military and police intervention was required because of the limitations and weaknesses of the indigenous peace-making process, especially the unrealistic expectations placed on the capacity of the Solomon Islands state to enforce the provisions of the TPA. The remarkable success of the initial phase of the mission can be attributed in large part to the strength of its enforcement capacity and the powerful deterrence provided by its military back-up.

Conversely, however, RAMSI has been criticized for minimizing – or crowding out – space for important indigenous peace-making agendas (Allen and Dinnen 2010; Mac Ginty 2008). There has been a tension between an approach to peacemaking that has been attempting to address some of the underlying structural causes of the conflict on the one hand, and one which has given primacy to policing and state building on the other. In light of the salience of external intervention in the Solomon Islands case, it is also important to consider the factors that informed Australia's decision to intervene, particularly as it represented a significant departure from previous policy toward the region.

As mentioned previously, the TPA brought an end to the open fighting between rival militias, averting the spectre of an all-out ethnic war. This was, in large part, owing to its comprehensive scope and attempt to tackle the full array of grievances identified by parties to the conflict. Its provisions included a proposed constitutional

reform process to allow for greater provincial autonomy; economic and other measures aimed at developing Malaita; investigation of land acquisition and property claims on Guadalcanal; compensation for lost and damaged property; and acceptance of the 1999 Bona-Fide Demands of the People of Guadalcanal.

However, the breadth and ambition of the TPA was simultaneously the source of its weakness as a viable framework for peacebuilding. It included quite unrealistic assumptions about the capacity of the weak, compromised and bankrupt Solomon Islands government to implement its terms. We have also seen that the TPA contributed to the subsequent instrumentalization of disorder and progressive collapse of governance that ultimately resulted in the intervention.

As late as January 2003, the Australian Foreign Minister dismissed the option of armed intervention in Solomon Islands as 'folly in the extreme' (Downer 2003). Less than six months later, RAMSI was deployed. Official explanations for this dramatic reversal in Australian policy were couched in the language of state failure that had become a central tenet in the security and foreign policy discourses emanating from Washington and its allies following the attacks of 9/11 in 2001 and the subsequent US-led 'War on Terror'. The prospect of state failure in the Solomon Islands – manifested in endemic lawlessness and the government's loss of control – was increasingly viewed as a direct threat to Australian and regional security. Consistent with this new security paradigm, international intervention to restore order and, thereafter, rebuild the state and economy was now viewed as the necessary and appropriate antidote.

On the eve of the deployment of RAMSI, an Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) publication titled 'Our failing neighbour' appealed to this new strategic thinking by evoking the metaphor of Solomon Islands becoming a 'petri dish' for the incubation of 'transnational and non-state security threats' (Wainwright 2003: 13). The paper advocated for a police-led peace-keeping effort to be followed by a long-term state-building exercise. Situating the intervention within a larger strategic frame arguably made it more palatable to an Australian constituency with very limited interest in the affairs of Pacific island micro-states. In any event, the intervention heralded a shift away 'from a particularist and developmental lens to a global and security lens in Pacific developments' (Fry and Kabutaulaka 2008: 16). It marked an explicit securitization of Australia's development assistance agenda in relation to Solomon Islands.

From RAMSI's perspective, restoring the rule of law through the pursuit of a rigorous law enforcement approach towards those involved in conflict-related crimes and the rebuilding of the state's law and order apparatus would address the pervasive criminality and impunity that was seen as a major source of the Solomon Islands' recent troubles. Police building was always intended as a gateway to a larger and long term state-building exercise. Consistent with prevailing conceptions of the 'liberal peace' (Duffield 2001), a functioning democratic state and open economy are viewed as the essential conditions for sustainable peace. This ambitious and longer term exercise is currently organized around three pillars: law and justice, economic governance, and the machinery of government.

RAMSI has attracted criticism from both local and regional quarters (Allen and Dinnen 2010; Braithwaite *et al.* 2010). Some of this reflects the inherent dilemmas of large external interventions. RAMSI's substantial presence in such a small country and the obvious asymmetry in resources between the mission and Solomon Islands government have aroused sensitivities about the former's dominance of critical decision making and the marginalization of indigenous actors. The fragility of the post-intervention peace was demonstrated most dramatically in the social unrest that erupted in Honiara following national elections in April 2006. Two days of rioting and arson caused extensive damage to the capital's Chinatown district and caught mission police completely off guard. These riots indicated the persistence of deeper frustrations and divisions lurking beneath the surface, and the failure to anticipate them hinted at the considerable distance separating the interveners and indigenous population.

Another important question is the extent to which RAMSI's peace-building efforts have paid sufficient attention to indigenous, or 'traditional', forms of peacemaking, which have a much greater emphasis on reconciliation and restorative justice as opposed to punishment and retribution (Mac Ginty 2008). A Truth and Reconciliation Commission has only recently been established, despite longstanding and widespread calls for reconciliation processes to occur at multiple levels. This raises the issue of RAMSI setting a peace agenda that has minimized or marginalized space for indigenous approaches to peacemaking.

A further example of this dynamic is the divergence between local and external views on reform of the Solomon Islands government system, particularly in the early days of the mission. While there may be good reasons to be wary of federalism as a 'quick-fix' to longstanding problems of governance and service delivery, the lukewarm reception by donors suggested a preference for rebuilding according to a standard formula and reluctance to support a bolder and, moreover, locally initiated reform proposal. For most Solomon Islanders, constitutional reform was viewed as a critical component of peace building – one which had been formalized in the TPA – rather than a discrete agenda in itself. In this vein, a 2005 government White Paper on constitutional reform proposals intended to introduce a federal system of government pointed out:

> the peace issues involved here are not the sort of issues capable of suppression or which the rule of law and the justice system including traditional methods alone can fix. They involve issues that are substantively political and extra constitutional in nature.
>
> (Solomon Islands Government 2005: 11–12)

Solomon Islanders' expectations of the RAMSI intervention remain high and extend well beyond the restoration of the rule of law and technicalities of capacity development and state building. A recurring local criticism of the mission is its apparent disinterest in addressing the 'root causes' of the conflict. In addition to the range of grievances identified in the TPA and earlier indigenous peace-making efforts, these 'root causes' cover a myriad of other issues, including the poor policies of successive governments, corruption, regional disparities in resources and income, land disputes, and longstanding disenchantment with the centralization of political power in Honiara and neglect of the rural areas where most people live.

Managing such high expectations is a continuing challenge for the mission. Recent surveys commissioned by RAMSI indicate that a very high proportion of the local population believe that conflict and lawlessness would return quickly if the mission were to depart anytime soon. Such views indicate the limited faith of many Solomon Islanders in the sustainability of the reconstruction and rebuilding work that has preoccupied RAMSI over the past seven years. They also reflect a widely shared sentiment that RAMSI has had more success in dealing with the symptoms of the country's recent crisis rather than its underlying causes.

Prospects

The best explanation for the *timing* of the violent conflict that erupted in Solomon Islands in late 1998 lies in the relationship between conflict and boom-and-bust economic cycles. The structural causes of the conflict, such as uneven development, competing forms of political authority and the 'youth bulge', have been present in Solomon Islands for decades. It makes sense, then, that it was the twin impact of the logging bust of 1997 and the structural adjustment reform program that followed it which provided the immediate impetus for the outbreak of conflict. This is consistent with research demonstrating that a boom-and-bust cycle is a threat to peace anywhere in the world, as well as with a recent detailed analysis of the causes of the conflict in Solomon Islands (Ferguson 2006; Braithwaite *et al.* 2010).

With the predicted exhaustion of the natural forest resource by 2015 and the anticipated economic crisis that this will engender, the next 10 to 15 years will be an extremely challenging period for the Solomon Islands. It is also the case that most of the underlying structural causes of the conflict remain, with much work yet to be done to address them. One of the most salient of these structural factors, the historical pattern of uneven development, is likely to be amplified over the coming decades as the economic base shifts toward mining. Increased urbanization will also further entrench real and perceived inequalities in the distribution of income and government services.

As recently argued by the World Bank (2010), it will be critical that an international security guarantee remains in place as the Solomon Islands tackles these enormous challenges of development and change. By keeping the peace, and gradually learning from its critics and partners, RAMSI has finally begun to create space for local agendas for peace building, such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission established in early 2009. These home-grown processes have the best potential to address some of the underlying causes of the conflict. It is therefore important that space continue to be provided for them to flourish.

Lessons

Following the recent analysis by Braithwaite *et al.* (2010: 151–166), we suggest two key lessons from the story of conflict and conflict diminution in Solomon Islands. The first lesson is drawn from two weaknesses in the way in which the RAMSI intervention was framed. First, it was blind to the many civil society and non-state actors who were providing security and engaging in peacemaking even at the height of the conflict. Second, it was not informed by a rigorous diagnosis of the causes of the conflict. These weaknesses invite three questions that might have formed a more appropriate framing for a collaborative peace process in the case of Solomon Islands; and are of wider, generalizable relevance to international peace-building interventions. These are:

1 What local capacities are currently providing community safety and human security and how might they be strengthened?
2 What were the structural and proximate factors that contributed to the conflict and how might they be addressed?
3 What are the new and emerging risks to the peace and how might they be hedged?

The second lesson relates to institutional learning and responsiveness. While the initial focus of the RAMSI intervention was firmly upon restoring and strengthening the security and financial management functions of the state – embedded in a broader state-building agenda – the mission has slowly and gradually evolved into a more responsive form of peace building. An important driver of this evolution has been the evaluation and review modalities that were built into the design of the mission. These have enabled regular internal and external critique, giving rise to 'a culture of grudging, if sometimes slow, responsiveness to critique' (Braithwaite *et al.* 2010: 158). The evolution of this responsiveness has created space for the expansion of important local agendas for peace building, which had previously been marginalized. We agree with the conclusion reached by Braithwaite *et al.* (2010) that the institutional learning could have been achieved more rapidly if the initial framing of the mission had been more attendant to the three questions asked above.

Notes

1 Estimates of the numbers of deaths and casualties vary widely. Between 100 and 200 people were killed as direct result of the fighting between late 1998 and late 2000. Around 35,000 people were displaced during this period. It is likely that a further 50 people were killed between late 2000 and the deployment of RAMSI in July 2003. Fighting on the Weather Coast of Guadalcanal during this period saw the displacement of a further 1,500 to 2,000 people. According to Amnesty International, the disruption to the provision of health services meant that many 'civilians' died from normally non-fatal illnesses such as malaria (2004). Amnesty has also documented numerous instances of rape, torture and abduction perpetrated during the conflict (2004).
2 The Forum's Biketawa Declaration on Mutual Assistance of 2000 allowed for collective action in response to a security crisis in a member state. See www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/political-governance-security/biketawa-declaration.

3 The following description of the main events of the conflict is largely based on the accounts of Fraenkel (2004) and Moore (2004).
4 The Solomon Islands has diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

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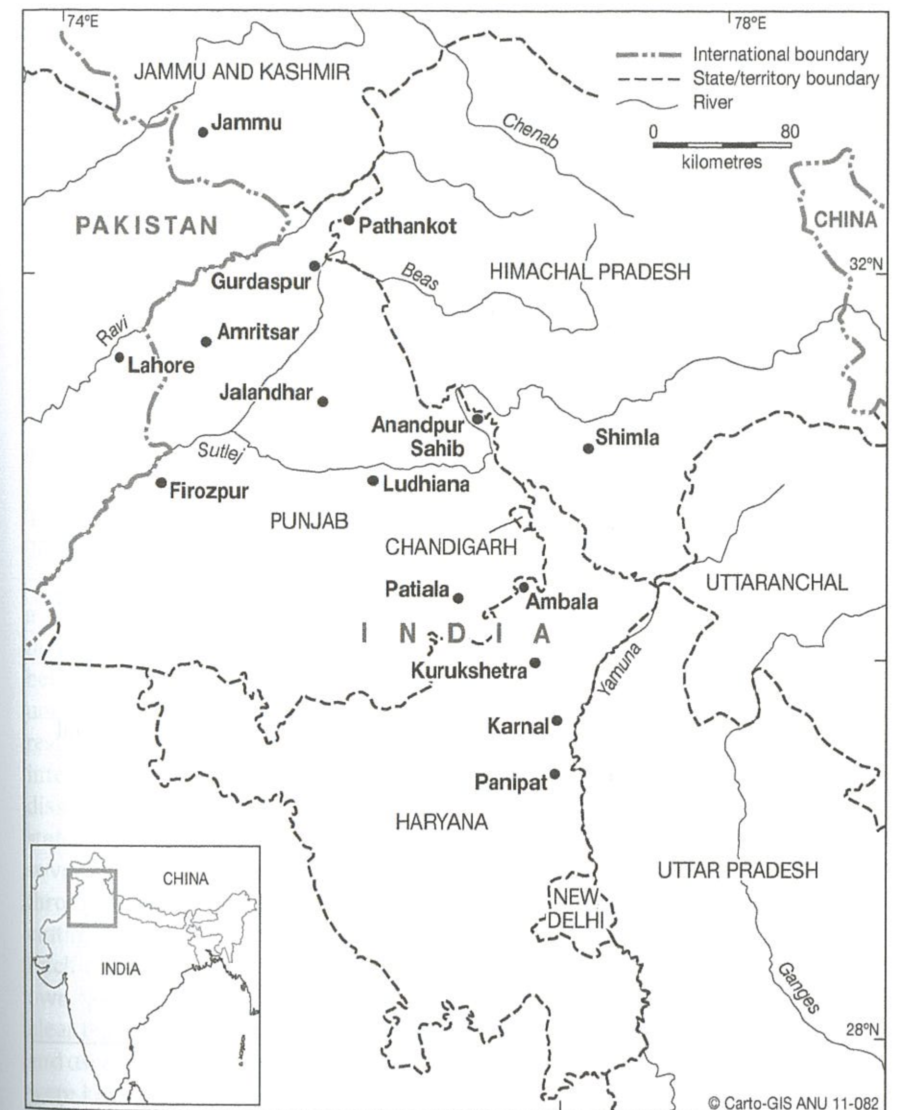

Map 6 Punjab

Major events: Punjab

1947	Partition of India; Province of Punjab divided between India and Pakistan. Transfer of populations
1956	Indian federation redrawn on the basis of language
1966	Division of Indian Punjab into a Punjabi-speaking state (Punjab) in which Sikhs are a majority and a Hindi-speaking state (Haryana) with a Hindu majority
1967	Green Revolution starts to take hold in Punjab
1975	Mrs Gandhi declares an 'emergency' and runs a dictatorship; Akali Dal confronts her regime and its members are imprisoned
1977	'Emergency' ends; Congress Party loses national elections; Akali Dal leads coalition government after state elections in Punjab
1978	Killings in Amritsar during clashes between Sikh groups; Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale comes to prominence
1980	Mrs Gandhi returns to power nationally
1981	Hindu newspaper owner murdered; Khalistan's violent phase begins
1983	Centre declares President's Rule in Punjab
1984	Bhindranwale and hundreds of followers killed in Golden Temple siege by Indian army; Mrs Gandhi murdered by her bodyguards
1985	'Punjab accord' between PM Rajiv Gandhi and Harchand Singh Longowal; Longowal murdered; Akali Dal wins Punjab elections; Air India plane explodes off Ireland – 329 die; Accord collapses
1987	Central government dismisses Akali Dal government President's Rule
1989	'Khalistanis' win most Punjab seats in general elections to national parliament
1992	Congress Party wins low-turnout state elections
1993	Khalistan movement in Punjab begins to peter out
1995	Chief Minister Beant Singh murdered
1997	Akali Dal BJP alliance wins state elections
2002	Congress win state elections
2007	Akali Dal–BJP alliance wins state elections
2012	Akali Dal–BJP alliance retains power in state elections