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## **CLEVER PEOPLE SOLVING DIFFICULT PROBLEMS – PERSPECTIVES ON WEAKNESS OF STATE AND NATION IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

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## **Clever People Solving Difficult Problems – Perspectives on Weakness of State and Nation in Papua New Guinea**

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by Anthony J. Regan

There is no doubt that Papua New Guinea is a country beset by difficult and growing problems. Increasingly, the conventional wisdom, especially in the donor community, but also among some Papua New Guineans, is that the country is in severe crisis, with most trends negative. A large part of the problems are seen to relate to the very weak capacity of the state in Papua New Guinea. State weakness is also said to be reinforced by that of the nation. Large-scale technical assistance programmes are required to strengthen both the state and the nation. Such perspectives underlie the December 2004 Strategy Paper by the influential Australian government established Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), entitled *Strengthening our Neighbour: Australia and the future of Papua New Guinea* (ASPI 2004).<sup>1</sup> It also influenced development of Australia's 2003 policy initiative, the Enhanced Cooperation Programme (ECP).

It may seem strange to introduce a workshop, and a collection of papers, about case studies of success stories of community level and other development in Papua New Guinea with a paper about the debate about the weakness of the state. There are, however, three main sets of reasons why those issues need to be considered as part of a discussion about success stories.

The first, and most obvious, reasons relate to the fact that a large part of the rationale for holding a workshop on success stories is a view that the increasingly negative image of Papua New Guinea is not the full picture, and should be corrected. If, however, our examination of local success stories is to provide a counter-balance to that negative image, there is a need to understand, criticise and respond to it and prescriptions associated with it. In so doing we should be better equipped to argue the possible wider significance of the case studies.

A second set of reasons relate to the fact that many of the case studies involve projects or developments that can be regarded as having occurred at least in part in response to the growing weakness of the state. If so, then the studies may indirectly reinforce the perception of growing problems. There is, however, an alternative view that should be explored - that the case studies provide evidence of an increasingly vibrant society, where ever-wider linkages are being made between groups that contribute to an evolving sense of nation. Slowly, but increasingly, groups in society are applying pressure to the state to perform in ways that they demand.

A third set of reasons concerns the main proposals for action by donors emerging from the debate about state-weakness, most of which involve massive increases in technical assistance to the state. No serious attention is being given to how developments in society (including those of the kind evident from some of the case studies present here) might be contributing to development of both the nation and the capacity of the state (through pressure from society on the state to perform according to the expectations of the people). If such contributions are being made, then it may be necessary to consider again the arguments about weakness of the state, and, more especially, the main prescriptions being proposed to deal with such weakness.

## **Strengthening the Weak State and Nation – ECP and ASPI**

The ASPI Paper argues that although the state in Papua New Guinea has become extremely weak, it has not failed or collapsed - possibly in contrast with neighbouring Solomon Islands, the subject of an earlier ASPI paper the title of which used the phrase “our failing neighbour (ASPI 2003). Poor and declining standards in delivery of basic services to the people are seen as one of the key measures of weakness. Others include corruption, increasing levels of violence, and a worsening law and order situation. The weakness is so profound that: ‘PNG has now reached the point at which its institutions are too weak themselves to undertake and sustain the kind of major reforms needed to turn the country around. If PNG is going to be strengthened, it is going to need much more help – and different kinds of help – than it has received over the past three decades. If Australia does not take the lead in offering that help, no one else will.’ (ASPI 2004:11)

One of the key factors contributing to the weakness of the state is said to be the relationship between state and society: ‘... the weakness of the state – the institutions of government – is in large measure the result of the weakness of the nation – the community of people bounded by some sense of shared identity and interest and commitment to their country.’ (ASPI 2004:34). A range of factors combine to ensure that there is little pressure from the society for the state to perform better. These include a dysfunctional political system, characterised by poor links between: voters and elected politicians, political parties and governments, and ministers and public servants. Not only is there immense cultural and linguistic diversity - described as ‘a major inhibition to economic development, complicating its service delivery and infrastructure development’ - but the *wantok* system is seen as a major impediment: ‘obligations to *wantoks* evidently impose real and often debilitating stresses on Papua New Guineans with authority or resources at all levels of society’ (ASPI 2004:33).

The weak sense of nation is, according to ASPI, the key. ‘[It is] the foundation of many of PNG’s problems. A weak government can deliver little to its people, so there is no reason for the people to offer it commitment. Officeholders, working for a government that has little popular standing, have little motivation to put the interests of the state and the nation above their own or those of their family. The resulting poor performance by the government further erodes service delivery, and reduces the standing of government in the eyes of the people’ (ASPI 2004:33).

The prescriptions offered by ASPI involve an indicative programme of four elements, directed to strengthening the bilateral relationship, the state, the economy and the nation, all at a cost of about \$500 million per year. Recognising the difficulties involved in solutions imposed from outside, the paper proposes that the details of any such programme would need to be developed through a ‘senior, multi-level discussion’ between the two countries (ASPI 2004:49).

The main costs of the programme would probably arise in relation to the broad proposals to strengthen the state and the nation. In relation to state-strengthening they involve:

- Increased support to existing projects directed at:
  - Strengthening central coordinating agencies;
  - Supporting reforms directed to achieving increased accountability;
  - Building public service administrative skills;
  - Overhauling the provincial government system, and

- Expanded direct support for delivery of critical services in relation to such sectors education, health (HIV/AIDS) and infrastructure, all of which largely involve more of what the existing AusAID programmes are doing already. It is also suggested that Australia might take direct control of some Papua New Guinea government activities, the examples given involving ‘functions in PNG which are a high priority for Australian interests, including customs, immigration and transport security’, and some institutions might be shared between the two countries in order to ‘avoid duplication, save money, and provide a better service to PNG’ (ASPI 2004:45).

On the basis of the analysis of the problem of state weakness in the first half of the ASPI Paper, it appears to be assumed that improved performance from a strengthened state would result in a stronger nation. But ASPI would not rely on state performance alone, and proposes programmes for strengthening the nation. These include what could be described as measures intended to engineer national unity, including improving national mass media, development of radio and television dramas portraying the affairs of ordinary Papua New Guineans (‘a kind of *Blue Hills* and *Neighbours* for PNG’ – ASPI 2004:47), development of sport (including possible participation of a PNG team in the Australian National Rugby League competition) and supporting civil society, especially through support for women’s groups. Other major measures listed under the nation-building programme could readily have also been listed under state-building, especially those for strengthening the electoral system and supporting constitutional reform.

Virtually all proposals for state-strengthening as well as significant components of the nation- and economy-strengthening programmes would clearly involve substantial injections of technical assistance for state capacity-building.

In summary, what is being proposed involves the state and donors cooperating so that donor funded capacity-building improves service delivery, which, together with measures intended to ‘engineer’ increased national unity, should strengthen the nation, which in turn should contribute to improved performance by the state by encouraging greater commitment to it by the people. These ideas can be presented diagrammatically as follows:

### **Some Critical Perspectives on the ASPI/ECP View**

The ASPI Paper proposals assume that the emergence of an effective state and a strong and unified nation in Papua New Guinea can be achieved largely through donor-funded technical assistance. It is part of the responsibility of Australia, as a strong and effective state, to assist in the strengthening of the weak states of the Pacific.

Various criticisms can be made of ASPI’s analysis of the problems in PNG, and of the prescriptions that it offers. To start with, putting so much down to the weakness of the state and of the nation is simplifying immensely what is an immensely complex set of issues concerning ‘development’ of what is probably the world’s most linguistically and culturally diverse peoples living in some of the world’s most difficult terrain. It is beyond the scope of this paper, however, to undertake a comprehensive critique of ASPI’s analysis. Accordingly, other than making some brief comments on the analysis, the focus of this critique is on the proposed prescriptions for dealing with weakness of state and nation.

The modern state and nation emerged in Europe, not as a result of technical assistance and engineering of emergence of national identity, but rather from social, economic and political forces that unfolded in unpredictable ways over hundreds of years and in close association with much chaos and violence. National unity came at a cost of destruction of many languages and cultures. In some ways, such chaos etc. had positive aspects – particularly in the sense that the rule of law, protection of human rights, modern democracy, and the measures that we now regard as the fundamentals of good governance all emerged to a large degree as part of processes of reactions to and efforts to limit chaos and violence. Among other things, groups in the society sought to establish norms that limited action by the state (and also by groups in society).

States emerged together with nations, slowly and imperfectly. Later, states and nations were transplanted, relatively effectively, to the European settler colonies of the Americas and Australasia. States and nations have emerged with much more difficulty in the former colonies in Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

Even in Europe and the European settler states, however, the processes of developing nations and states have had their problems. For example, in terms of the weakness of the nation, there continue to be strong, and violent, secessionist movements in many parts of Europe. In terms of weakness of the state, Ron May points not only to experience of an Australian ambassador in Italy in the 1980s, stopped by the Italian Government from travelling to a part of Italy where the Government could not guarantee his safety, but also to the fact that government authority is tenuous in large parts of many big cities in the United States (May 2003:39). May suggest that state weakness and failure should not be seen as phenomena limited to third world countries. Rather, we should think in terms of a continuum of state effectiveness ‘... stretching from, for example, Somalia, where state collapse has been dramatic ... through varying degrees of state weakness, to countries in which the state is well-entrenched with a virtual monopoly over coercion, and effective (if perhaps sometimes misguided) in its ability to exercise authority and deliver services’ (May 2003:40).

The relationship of the state and the society in the emergence of a strong and unified nation is a complex one. Nations did not just emerge through action by, and increasing effectiveness of, the state. Broader political and economic developments contributed to emergence of strong nations, for example through increased linkages between diverse localised social groups (thereby contributing to creation of new and broader identities), and between such groups and the state. Society had important roles in shaping the state - core features of modern states (including the rule of law etc.) emerged because of dissatisfaction with the state on the part of groups in society.

While state and nation developed over hundreds of years in Europe, the real concern with state weakness in Papua New Guinea is that a strong state has not emerged after less than 100 years of weak colonial rule and just under three decades of independence. Yet the obstacles to rapid development of state and nation in Papua New Guinea are significant. While some of these have been mentioned by ASPI, on the one hand the paper does not acknowledge the full extent of the difficulties posed by the circumstances of Papua New Guinea, and on the other hand it seems to minimise them by indicating that it is essentially increased technical assistance that is needed to overcome the difficulties.

In relation to the development of a strong nation, existing social groupings in Papua New Guinea are probably smaller and more diverse (culturally and linguistically) than they were in Europe when modern states and nations began to emerge. Hence the problems involved in unifying this immense diversity are of a scale not experienced perhaps anywhere else in the world. There are limited (though increasing) linkages between the small social groups, and hence there is only a limited basis for development of cross-cutting identities that can contribute to a strong sense of nation. Further, localised societies tend to see the state as something to be used, and even to be plundered – political leaders who can deliver state resources to their people tend to gain popular support (see Nonggorr (2000) for some interesting examples provided by a prominent Papua New Guinea). Hence, while poor performance by the state does not help the emergence of a strong nation, it is not necessarily the main factor in the limited development of national identity. In the circumstances of Papua New Guinea it is remarkable that a sense of national identity has developed as much as it has.

The continued existence of numerous small societies and the limited existence of cross-cutting linkages between them certainly does have negative aspects in addition to the possible inhibitory impact on economic development noted by ASPI (above). These include contributing to conflict and violence, as well as to oppression of women. But it also has positives. It means that there has been no ethnic group in Papua New Guinea big enough to threaten to take control of the state, thereby avoiding one of the major sources of political instability that has plagued so many other post-colonial states. It has also contributed to continuity in a high degree of self-reliance among Papua New Guineans – to an ability to manage despite difficult circumstances. It is certain that the extent of the weakness of the state would have been far more evident and far more of a problem but for the resilience of customary communities.

There are also many obstacles to the emergence of a strong state. The first experience of the state in Papua New Guinea was the colonial state, imposed from outside, often with use of force, and with limited regular impact on life for most people in rural areas. While the effectiveness of the colonial state increased after World War II, not only was it relatively effective for only a brief period of 20 years or so, but it was largely dependent on white men. Even in remote rural sub-districts in the 1960s, there would normally be a number of white officers. Force continued to be used to impose the will of the colonial state, mainly through the police. Relative effectiveness for a brief period does not mean that there was ever anything like a strong state delivering multiple services to all of its people, and with a complete monopoly on coercion. Nostalgia for the effective colonial state is to a large degree romanticisation of the situation that existed then. Rather, by independence, most Papua New Guineans still had little regular contact with the state and even less understanding of it. In terms of capacity of Papua New Guineans to administer the state, until the 1960s, ten to fifteen years before independence, very limited effort was expended on its development. In the lead up to independence, the focus was on the development of appropriate political institutions, and not on building the capacity of the new state to deliver services to its people through Papua New Guinean personnel.

Had there been strong and effective state institutions staffed mainly by Papua New Guineans operating for some decades (a situation of the kind that existed in colonial India and in a number of British colonies in Africa), then Papua New Guinea might have had the capacity at independence to at least maintain existing capacity. But the way things happened could hardly

have been a worse preparation for maintaining capacity. The colonial state largely excluded Papua New Guineans from middle and senior level administrative roles until just the last few years before independence. Without a strong and sustainable administration based on Papua New Guinean offices operating long before independence, the only alternative would have been for a much more prolonged process of localisation. But in fact, at very short notice, an extremely rapid localisation programme was undertaken in the few years leading to independence. In fairness, that was in large part a response to closely linked international and local pressures for local control. But in practice it meant that mainly very junior and inexperienced officers were thrust into middle and senior level positions with almost no preparation.

As a result, there was a very poor foundation for development of a strong state, and makes it no surprise that capacity has weakened since independence, with the sudden withdrawal of the white-men that mostly ran it until then, and the limited capacity that a weak new state had to develop its own capacity. The lack of capacity to undertake and sustain major reforms noted by ASPI (above) is not a new phenomenon – merely one that has grown more acute in recent years. Australian aid, at about \$330 million per year in 2003-04 (prior to the ECP beginning), has not made a huge impact. But is that a surprise, or merely an indication of the extent of the growing problems that Australia left behind at independence? As ASPI (2004:35) points out, \$330 is not much more than the annual cost of running one of Canberra's major hospitals. Of course that is also just one of several hospitals providing part only of the health needs of less than 500,000 people concentrated in a small area with ready access to services. By contrast, the expectations of that \$333 million in aid is that it should have appreciably lifted the capacity of the state to deliver a wide range of services to a rapidly expanding population of almost 6 million people scattered through some of the world's most difficult terrain.

In terms of the proposals to increase technical assistance directed at building state capacity, first, there have been significant injections of technical assistance in Papua New Guinea already, and while that has been far from wasted in terms of supporting performance of the state, it has not had dramatic impacts on building state capacity. In all of the circumstances as outlined, it should not have been expected to have done so. Further, there is little evidence from elsewhere in the world of success in state and nation building mainly through provision of technical assistance. Perhaps the best examples would come from post-war reconstruction of Japan and Germany, where the outcomes occurred in dramatically different circumstances from those existing in Papua New Guinea. All over the world, the experience of technical assistance has been one of quite limited effectiveness (e.g. see Morgan 2002).

That is not to say that technical assistance does not have important roles to play – only that it is most unlikely to achieve the outcomes that seem to be expected of it by the ASPI/ECP analysis. More importantly, there may be alternative analyses which indicate that the burden will not need to be borne by technical assistance alone.

Finally, it also needs to be noted that the ASPI/ECP analysis (together with their prescriptions) is not widely accepted in Papua New Guinea. There are political leaders that support it, at least publicly, mainly because of the resources that it brings – which they see as reducing pressures on a resource-poor government. But it is an analysis that tends to be deeply resented, especially among senior bureaucrats and people with higher levels of formal education. They see it as

failing to understand the complexity and difficulty, and failing to recognise positive aspects, of the situation, as well as a threat to sovereignty and likely to restore a high degree of control to Australia and Australians (hence the twisting of the name of Enhanced *Cooperation* Programme to Enhanced *Colonialism* Programme often heard in Port Moresby in 2004).

The ECP is seen as having been imposed. Some of the Australian officials involved in negotiations of key aspects of the arrangements and their implementation are seen as having behaved with insensitivity to their Papua New Guinean counterparts. Part of the problem here may be that much of the responsibility for negotiation and implementation rested with a Canberra-based inter-departmental committee, most of whose members had seldom set foot in Port Moresby, let alone had long and extensive contact with Papua New Guineans and with wide areas of the country. There seems to have been little understanding of the complex webs of interpersonal relations that play such an important part in the policy making and other decision-making processes of a country such as Papua New Guinea with such a small urban elite.

The ASPI Paper pays more attention than was the case with the ECP to the need for decisions on the content of new measures to assist Papua New Guinea being made jointly with Papua New Guinea. It talks of the need for both 'local momentum' and 'home-grown solutions' (ASPI 2004:42-3). But the analysis of the nature of the problem and of the broad parameters of the programme of prescriptions seem to have been set already by ASPI. The consultation required, according to ASPI, is about how such a programme 'might be pursued' (ASPI 2004:49). Further, the need for a high degree of Australian leadership of the programme seems to be emphasised elsewhere in the Paper. For example, in discussing the need for 'local momentum' in support of reform, the Paper argues that many Papua New Guineans are 'fatalistic' about the country's problems, feeling that nothing can be done about state weakness, and so to build commitment to state and nation-building, people need help to see what it might involve and where it might lead: 'The prospect of a broad-based program of assistance, backed by Australia, might help provide clearer hope that things could improve. The psychological impact of a high-profile Australian commitment to a long-term, generational program of engagement in strengthening PNG's government could start the ball rolling.' (ASPI 2004:41). These and other passages in the Paper are likely to raise considerable concern in Port Moresby that the problems experienced with the ECP will be just the beginning of a re-assertion of Australian control of Papua New Guinea. There must be a serious risk that the ASPI proposals will be misunderstood by many in Papua New Guinea.

### **An Outline of an Alternative Analysis and Modified Prescription**

Both before the colonial era began, and ever since, the people of Papua New Guinea have exhibited a great deal of capacity and inventiveness in dealing with problems of social organisation and survival. There have always been many clever people finding their own solutions to the difficult problems that confront them.<sup>ii</sup> For example, in pre-colonial times Papua New Guineans developed complex agricultural and social systems (including effective ways of managing conflict in the absence of state structures). In response to the problems currently being experienced, many clever people are finding new solutions, as the success stories outlined in this volume illustrate.

It tends to be assumed that the problems being experienced by Papua New Guinea in general have no positive side to them, that all is gloom. But experience shows us that conflict and chaos can bring opportunities as well as causing problems, can contribute to positive developments, and may even be needed to achieve positive change. The development in Europe of the rule of law and protection of human rights, already mentioned, provide examples.

It can be argued that that what we are witnessing in Papua New Guinea is in fact part of a long historical process of development of a state appropriate to the circumstances of the country, replacing the largely inherited and little understood colonial state, which is gradually weakening and decaying, or at least in the process of transformation. At the same time, the authority and coherence of the many small-scale traditional societies to which people belong have been gradually eroding. Churches, schools, local governments, plantation work, squatter settlements, *raskol* gangs, and many other developments have all been contributing to the development of linkages between members of localised social groupings for decades, and the processes involved are accelerating. These ongoing developments are part of organic processes contributing to the emergence of new groupings and identities beyond traditional local ones. They include a slowly developing sense of national identity.

One of the risks of large-scale technical assistance is that it could easily result largely in propping up what is decaying or transforming. It has been suggested elsewhere that the whole notion of a failed, collapsed or weakened states implies that at some earlier point it operated effectively, whereas the Melanesian states have never done so, and that proposals for state-strengthening run the risk of re-building what has not worked, possibly inviting further failure some time later (Dinnen 2004).

At the same time there is evidence of positive reaction by various groups to the problems being experienced by Papua New Guineans. Many are far from being 'fatalistic'. In particular, quite apart from the efforts of various NGOs, such as the Papua New Guinea chapter of Transparency International, there are the beginnings of diverse pressures from society on the state to perform according to the expectations of the people. Such developments can be seen, for example, in cases presented in this publication concerning localised efforts in both rural areas and squatter settlements to develop new approaches to law and justice. In the process, communities are not only developing links with state structures on their own terms, but are also applying pressure to the state to get its institutions to perform in ways that meet local needs. These pressures from the people are part of the impetus for development of new law and justice policies by the National Government.

Another example involves Bougainville, where the experience of the nine years of conflict, 1988-97, has contributed to development of strong consensus amongst leaders in most – if not all – communities that violence is no longer an acceptable means of resolving conflict, especially between communities. The same experience has also contributed to widely held views about the need for the state – especially the police – to avoid the use of violence in its dealings with communities. That is not to say that violence no longer occurs in Bougainville, but rather that when it does a wide range of pressures emerges from within communities to stop it.

In addition, as Bougainville moves to develop an autonomous government with extensive powers, in accordance with the *Bougainville Peace Agreement* of August 2001 and the amendments to the National *Constitution* (2002) that implement it, there is extensive discussion of the need to develop police, courts and penal systems with marked differences from those operating in the rest of Papua New Guinea. For example, section 148(2) of the *Constitution for the Autonomous Region of Bougainville* adopted by the Bougainville Constituent Assembly in November 2004 provides for a Bougainville Police Service, not a police force – the term ‘force’ in relation to police was rejected quite explicitly. The Constitution also calls for the Bougainville police to ‘develop rehabilitatory and reconciliatory concepts of policing’, and to ‘work in harmony with communities and encourage community participation in its activities’, and ‘support and work with traditional chiefs and other traditional leaders to resolve disputes and maintain law and order in communities’. Such concepts are in large part the outcome of rejection of the model of policing previously experienced in Bougainville, one which is seen as having contributed to considerable violence being used against Bougainvilleans by Police Mobile Squads in the first months of the conflict, something that was a major factor in escalation of the conflict at a time when otherwise it might well have been manageable. So out of the experience of conflict is emerging the development by Bougainvilleans of widely acceptable and applicable norms about the use of violence by both groups in society and by the state.

It seems arguable that what we are seeing is the beginning of development of a Papua New Guinean notion of the rule of law, one that is emerging out of the people’s own experiences and concerns, and that has the potential to gradually contribute to wider pressures from the society on the state.

Such an analysis gives rise to at least three potentially important perspectives that may need to be taken into account when considering the ASPI/ECP prescriptions for Papua New Guinea. First, the processes of developing a Papua New Guinea state appropriate to the particular needs of the circumstances of Melanesia are in fact already in existence. The key dynamics are internally generated. There are significant advantages in such processes, as opposed to externally developed and led solutions. People can better understand and can take ownership of what is developed by them, on the basis of their own understanding of their needs.

Second, development of an effective state and strong nation are certain to be long-term, slow and gradual processes, and locally generated. While the ASPI Paper is certainly conscious of the need for a long-term commitment, at the same time the impression given by proposals for very large technical assistance programmes is that there a ‘quick fix’ is possible. It also tends to assume that the best ‘fix’ is external. It tends to demean internal efforts. Again, this is not to say there is no role for technical assistance – rather, that there should not be unrealistic expectations created, even unintentionally, about it being a panacea.

Third, many of the case studies presented here indicate dynamic efforts by Papua New Guineans to find solutions to difficult problems, willingness to contribute to the common good, and strong views about the way the state should be operating. A number of them also indicate interesting and creative roles being played by particular state institutions, and by donor-funded projects.

All of this could suggest alternative approaches and strategies to that involved in the ASPI Paper and the ECP. In summary, this might involve a less exclusive focus on the role of technical assistance to strengthen the state. It might also involve more efforts to support and encourage community and other local-level initiatives of many kinds. ASPI talks of the need for its proposed program to 'put a top priority on measures which help sustain and build demand for effective government and strong institutions among PNG's people' (ASPI 2004:41). However, in terms of the specifics of its proposed program, the only discussion of such initiatives is a brief mention of possibly supporting civil society, and in particular women's groups (Ibid:48). It is suggested that it would be worth considering much more emphasis in this area.

There has already been some experience gained of such approaches in some of AusAID's programmes in Papua New Guinea, including various approaches to funding local initiatives (such as the Community Development Scheme), mini-credit schemes, the Bougainville trunk road project, and so on. The lessons learnt from these projects would warrant much more careful scrutiny.

Of course, it would not be wise to head too much further down such a path without first undertaking careful research and evaluation concerning existing initiatives and their impacts – but the same caveat should apply in relation to all of the proposals being made by ASPI. Further, the greatest care would need to be taken in distribution of funds and support to local communities, for as experience in Bougainville and elsewhere has shown, donor funding to communities can create its own problems. However, it is likely that many such initiatives can be encouraged with minimal funding support.

In summary, what is being proposed would be that in addition to the state and donors cooperating on capacity-building measures to improve state service delivery, the state and donors should work to encourage community initiatives which build links both between communities, and between communities and the state, thereby strengthening the nation and building pressures for improved performance by the state. These ideas can be presented diagrammatically as follows:

More generally, however, there is a serious issue about the processes required to develop agreed programs of action responding to possible weakness of state and nation. Any sense in Papua New Guinea that decisions on programs are being made outside and largely imposed on the country is likely to be counter-productive. If Australia is serious about assisting Papua New Guinea to strengthen state and nation through provision of significant additional funding, it should not begin by engaging with Papua New Guinea about how best to pursue the four part program proposed by ASPI. Rather, ideally Australia should begin discussions with a clean sheet, committed to developing joint proposals.

### **Summarising Some Perspectives**

1. While there are many and perhaps deepening problems facing Papua New Guinea, all is not failing, and indeed, there continues to be much that works in Papua New Guinea.
2. While it is true that conflict and chaos will not usually be universally welcomed, at the same time they can contribute to positive developments.

3. What is strength or weakness, success or failure, problem or solution, in terms of development of the state and nation, will often not be readily judged in the short term. What is seen as a failure or weakness now may in 10, 20 or 50 years be seen as an important contributor to positive development.
4. Many individuals and groups are working to find their own solutions to problems in Papua New Guinea, and in the process are developing the beginnings of new linkages between groups in society, and between such groups and the state, that are creating increasing pressure for development of a less 'colonial' and more 'Melanesianised' state to perform in accordance with peoples' expectations.
5. Too great a focus on large-scale technical assistance and capacity building programmes may well undermine locally generated pressures for change. Technical assistance is unlikely to be the only, or the best, way of state and national building.
6. There are no obviously applicable models for successful rapid engineering of state-building or nation-building.
7. Some possible implications for donors that arise from these perspectives include:
  - There is a need for much more detailed research about what is happening in state and society, and for evaluation of the results being achieved by institutions, in Papua New Guinea;
  - to better understand the complex situation in countries such as Papua New Guinea, there is a need for policy-making bodies and aid agencies in Australia to have more staff with specialised knowledge of the countries that they are dealing with;
  - There is a need for personnel in policy-making bodies and aid agencies to build closer personal relationships in countries such as Papua New Guinea, not only so that trends and developments can be better understood, but also so that potential misunderstandings about donor policies are minimised;
  - Processes directed at achieving change are much more likely to be successful if they are locally generated and driven than if imposed from outside;
  - There is ample room for involvement of donors in locally-generated processes for change, including through the use of conditionalities.

### **Relating the 'Success Stories' to Wider Developments**

It may be helpful to relate the 'success stories' being examined in this volume to some of the wider issues just upon in this paper about the way that the state and society are developing in Papua New Guinea. This might be done by asking what particular cases tell us about:

1. The building of links between groups in society;
2. Whether groups are being encouraged to accept limits on their actions, especially limits on the use of violence in conflict and dispute resolution?
3. Whether activities of groups are contributing to building links between state and society, and creating pressures on the state to perform in particular ways, and/or to accept limits on the ways its institutions operate?
4. Whether groups are encouraging donors to operate as partners and supporters of locally initiated processes?

5. What parts of the state are not only operating effectively, but are also contributing to building links with groups in society, and between such groups?
6. What experiences are there of donor programmes working in partnership and in support of locally initiated processes that contribute to building links between groups in society, and between such groups and the state?

## References and Further Reading

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<sup>i</sup> The ASPI Strategy paper was available in draft form during the workshop where this presentation was made, and was referred to in that presentation. It was published soon after the workshop, and so comment in this paper relates to the published version.

<sup>ii</sup> This description of Papua New Guineans originates in comments made by Mel Togolo at a workshop on land policy held at the Divine Word University. I am grateful to Fr. Pat Gersch for repeating the description to me.