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**MINORITY RIGHTS IN FIJI AND THE SOLOMON ISLANDS:
Reinforcing Constitutional Protections, Establishing Land Rights
and Overcoming Poverty**

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* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the members of the Working Group or the United Nations

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Executive summary

The Pacific region is highly ethnically diverse, with nations made up of numerous minority groups, as well as resettled peoples and internal migrants from different parts of far-flung groups of islands.

At independence, Pacific states faced serious issues about the protection of minorities in post-colonial constitutions and disputes about minority land rights, which were often viewed as conflicting with those of indigenous groups. These issues subsequently became major focal points for political conflict and instability.

In Fiji, conflict between indigenous Fijians and descendants of Indian migrant labourers brought to work on sugar cane plantations before 1916 has dominated post-independence politics. Coups in 1987 and 2000 were aimed at entrenching the political dominance of ethnic Fijians. Politicians representing the minority Indo-Fijian¹ community have been unable to participate in government. Thousands of Indo-Fijians have been evicted from sugar cane farms during 1997-2002. Around 20% of the 1987 Indo-Fijian population have subsequently left the country.

Other smaller groups are on the margins of official developmental policy. In particular descendants of labour migrants from Western Melanesia in Fiji, and settlers from then once phosphate-rich island of Banaba find themselves trapped in a position of social deprivation, and exclusion from mainstream political processes.

In the Solomon Islands, a process of inter-island migration has created large internal indigenous minorities. During 1998-2000, indigenous militia groups on the island of Guadalcanal drove settlers from the neighbouring island of Malaita off the fertile northern plains. Gilbertese and Polynesian settlers on Guadalcanal were also targeted. Many settlers fled into the country's nearby capital, Honiara.

In June 2000, a rival Malaitan militia group seized control of Honiara and deposed the elected government, triggering further conflict between armed groups. The two groups reached a settlement, the Townsville Accord, in October 2000, and a new government was elected in December 2001. But serious frictions remain, and most settlers have been unable to return to their homes.

The country is currently moving towards the adoption of a federal constitution, and state government, a process that runs the risk of further weakening the position of minorities.

Introduction: The South Pacific

The South Pacific is the most ethno-linguistically diverse region in the world. It is home to over a quarter of the world's stock of known languages, and linguistic divisions tend to reflect important political cleavages and cultural distinctions.

The larger volcanic islands of Melanesia are characterised by exceptional regional and cultural diversity. Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are composed of numerous minority groups, with no single group attaining numerical preponderance. Papua New Guinea, with around 832 distinct living languages, is the most ethnically diverse state in the world, while Vanuatu, with approximately 109 languages but a far smaller population, has the highest number of languages *per capita* in the world. Melanesian social systems tend to be small-scale. Intense clan-level leadership competition has been carried over into national politics, resulting in regular regime turnover and incumbent MP defeats.

By contrast, the smaller islands of Polynesia and Micronesia are mostly relatively ethnically homogenous, with small migrant or settler communities². Centralised chiefly hierarchies underpin social and cultural systems, in marked contrast to the diffuse 'big man' style of political leadership characteristic of many parts of Melanesia. Polynesian and Micronesian political divisions tend to focus around tensions between different islands or island groups, peripheral outer islands and the metropolis, factions allied in terms of religious or educational experiences or personality-specific rivalries, rather than ethnic differences.

In three Melanesian territories, domestic ethno-linguistic differentiation has been combined with important divisions between indigenous and settler-populations. In Fiji, descendants of labour migrants from the Indian sub-continent make up around 40% of the population, with the indigenous population exhibiting greater ethnic homogeneity than that in the Melanesian countries to the west. In Indonesian province of West Papua, the indigenous Melanesian inhabitants comprise perhaps 263 separate ethno-linguistic groups, with Indonesian migrants making up around 40% of the population. In French New Caledonia, descendants of white settlers comprise around 35% of the population, while the 40% indigenous Kanak population possesses 32 separate linguistic groups. All three countries have witnessed major conflict connected with constitutional status and/or independence or autonomy between indigenous political movements and those representing settlers or their descendants.

In the Melanesian countries, minority land rights have tended to become a major focus of political conflict. Melanesian peoples were traditionally subsistence-oriented shifting cultivators, with the result that colonial policies on land alienation or 'waste lands' acquisition tended to stir controversy. Migrant settlement, or the resettlement of peoples from other parts of colonial empires, often proved intractable issues at independence, leaving non-land-owning minorities on customary lands in a vulnerable position.

Debates about protection of minorities were central to post-independence constitutional debates in the Pacific, and arrangements forged between larger groups have tended to marginalize smaller, more vulnerable, communities.

In the two countries that are the focus of this paper – Fiji and the Solomon Islands – ethnic frictions led to major political disruptions during 1998-2000. Both were former British colonies, and both have witnessed serious frictions owing to disputes about land rights and constitutional protections. Both pose atypical problems of minority rights. In Fiji, both the indigenous inhabitants and Indo-Fijians have, at different points, formed the minority community. Ethnic Fijian politicians regularly point to the fate of indigenous minorities in Australia and New Zealand as a justification for seeking to establish a protectionist state. Indo-Fijian politicians decry a lack of political equality due to Fijian supremacism, and seek to mobilise broader, non-ethnically-based, political groupings. In the Solomon Islands, the 95% Melanesian community is so internally divided amongst different linguistic and/or clan-based groups that no clear homogenous ‘majority’ group exists. Recent conflict has largely been between distinct Melanesian groups, and discrimination has been aimed at internal as migrants from different parts of the country as well as settlers from overseas.

Table 1. *Population, Ethno-linguistic Diversity and Human Development Indicators for the Pacific Islands*

	Population 000s	Ethno- Linguistic Diversity ¹	Real GDP <i>per capita</i> (US\$) 1998	Life Expectancy at birth 1998	Adult Literacy Rate % 1998
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<u>Melanesia</u>					
Papua New Guinea	5,130	832	1,196	54.0	28.2
Vanuatu	197	109	1,231	65.8	33.5
Solomon Islands	447	69	926	64.7	30.3
Fiji Islands	812	10	2,684	66.5	92.9
New Caledonia	213	38	15,000	73.0	91.0
<u>Polynesia</u>					
French Polynesia	235	9	10,800	75.0	98.0
Tonga	100	3	1,868	68.0	99.0
Samoa	170	2	1,060	66.6	95.7
<u>Micronesia</u>					
Micronesia, Fed. States	118	17	2,070	65.7	71.3
Marshall Islands	52	2	1,182	65.0	74.4
Kiribati	91	2	702	61.6	92.2
Palau	19	4	8,027	69.0	91.4

Sources: World Bank, 2002, *World Development Indicators*; UNDP, *Pacific Human Development Report*, 1999, Suva, 1999 (supplemented from territorial sources for New Caledonia and French Polynesia); Ethno-linguistic diversity from Summer Institute of Linguistics, ethnologue.com.

Notes: ¹ Ethno-linguistic data includes European and other migrant languages, and pidgin languages.

2. Fiji

Fiji is the second largest of the Pacific Island states (after PNG). It has a relatively diversified economy, reliant on tourism, sugar, gold, timber and garments and has considerably higher average *per capita* incomes than its Melanesian neighbours to the west.

Table 2.1 *Fiji's Population Distribution, 1996*

	Number	Percentages
Indigenous Fijians	393,575	50.8%
Indo-Fijians	338,818	43.7%
Part-Europeans	11,685	1.5%
Other Pacific Islanders	10,463	1.3%
Rotumans	9,727	1.3%
Europeans	3,103	0.4%
Other	2,767	0.4%
Total	775,077	100.0%
Women	393,931	50.8%
Men	381,146	49.2%

Fiji Census of Population and Housing Bureau of Statistics, 1996.

2.1. Historical Background.

Fiji became a British colony in 1874, after the signing of a Deed of Cession by customary chiefs. Faced with a steep 19th century decline in the indigenous population³, colonial authorities pursued a protectionist policy. Fijians were largely kept out of the commercial plantations, native land was declared inalienable⁴ and legislation kept Fijians confined in rural villages under their customary chiefly system⁵. Taxes-in-kind were designed to keep Fijians out of the market economy, as were obligations to perform compulsory labour services for the chiefs. The traditional chiefly hierarchy was re-organised into a separate 'Fijian administration' that served as a functioning arm of the colonial order⁶.

The workforce for the country's commercial plantations was instead largely provided by the importation of indentured labourers, firstly from the nearby New Hebrides and Solomon Islands and subsequently, on a much larger scale, from the Indian sub-continent. Between 1879 and 1916, just over 60,000 Indian indentured labourers arrived in the colony, most to work on sugar cane plantations. Labourers were generally recruited at Calcutta or (from 1903) Madras in South India on five-year contracts at wages of 1 shilling a day. Under the indenture system, Penal clauses attached to labour contracts were used to convict large numbers of Indian workers for offences against colonial labour regulations. For example, labourers could be convicted for failing to complete specified daily 'tasks'. Some 80-90% of

all indentured labourers were convicted under the labour ordinances during the 1880s and 1890s⁷. The negative experience of the indenture era (*g'imit*) to this day plays an important political role in Indo-Fiji politics.

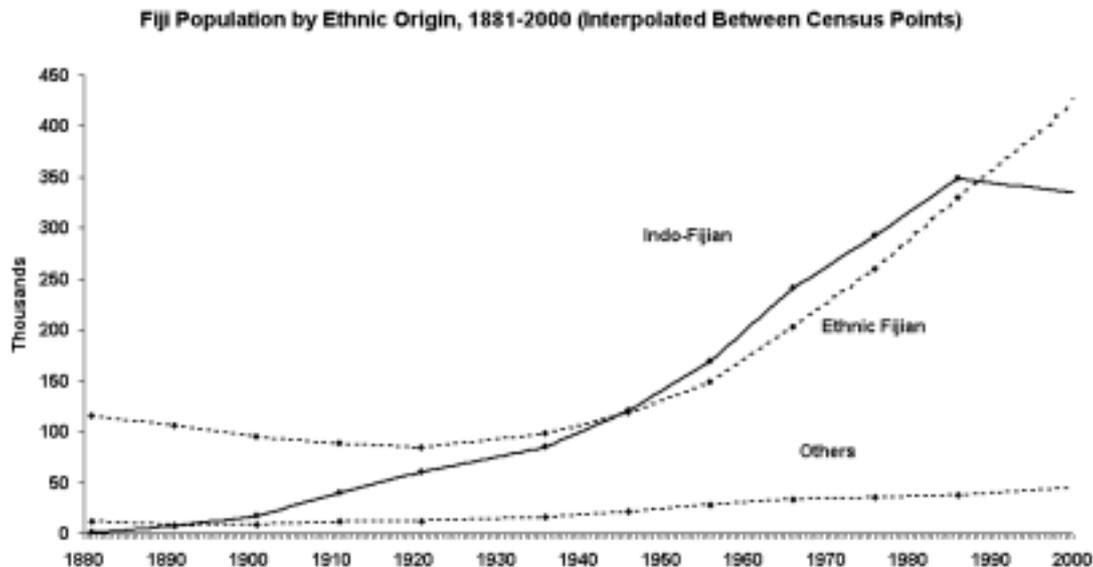


Figure 2.1

Indian Indentured labour importation was abolished in 1916, and the final contracts were cancelled in 1920. Around 60% of Indian labourer migrants had chosen to stay in Fiji at the end of their contracts. From the 1890s onwards, the Fiji-born Indian population also began to accelerate, bringing a relatively more rapid increase in Indian population levels (see figure 2.1). After 1920, a steady trickle of free migrants arrived from India. Following the end of indenture, Fiji's sugar industry was gradually reorganised away from a plantation-based operation and towards an industry based mainly on small tenant-run farms supplying cane to one of Fiji's four large mills run by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company.

The end of the indenture era was accompanied by greater political assertiveness by Indo-Fijians. Indo-Fijians secured elected representation in 1929, although from race-based communal constituencies. Indian political leaders consistently called for 'common roll' elections and political equality⁸. Colonial officials and European settlers, fearful of possible Indian political control under an open-franchise system, insisted on the retention of racially-based electoral rolls. In justification, they appealed to the 1874 Deed of Cession as a solemn charter of trusteeship and commitment to the maintenance of the 'pre-eminence of the Fijian race'⁹.

Nevertheless, domestic Indian agitation and the desire to attract free labour migrants from the Indian sub-continent made the colonial government to some degree responsive to appeals from the Indian government to allow greater political rights for Indians. The

compromise eventually reached was an assurance of “parity of representation”, implying an equal number of Fijian, European and Indian members of the Legislative Council, (despite the huge disparities in the size of their populations).

In the run up to independence in 1970, the British authorities abolished the official majority in the Legislative Council, and increased local representation. Fijians and Indo-Fijians were given equal numbers of seats in parliament, with the balance of power held by the over-represented ‘general’ voters (those of European, part-European or Chinese descent). The Alliance Party, modelled on its Malaysian counterpart, was intended to bring together organisations representing the country’s three major ethnic groups in a centrist coalition. The Indian arm was always the weakest. From the 1960s onwards, Indo-Fijians organised separately first in the Federation Party (renamed National Federation Party - NFP - after independence) and from 1985 onwards also in the Fiji Labour Party (FLP).

At three elections after independence, predominantly Indo-Fijian-backed parties emerged victorious. In April 1977, a narrow and unexpected NFP victory was followed by a constitutional crisis, partly occasioned by internal fissions in the NFP. The Governor General, an indigenous Fijian, intervened, controversially, to reinstate the defeated Fijian Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, pending fresh elections in September 1977 which Mara was able to win. In 1987, a coalition between the FLP and NFP emerged victorious and installed an indigenous Fijian Labour Party member, Timoci Bavadra, as Prime Minister. Within a month, on 14th May 1987, Sitiveni Rabuka, a Lieutenant-Colonel in Fiji’s army, staged a coup d’etat aimed at securing ‘a Fiji in which the Fijians will have no fear of being totally dominated by an immigrant race’¹⁰.

Only after a second coup on September 25th 1987¹¹, and Fiji’s departure from the Commonwealth, was the country conditionally returned to civilian rule - under an interim administration headed by the former Prime Minister, Ratu Mara. Formal return to civilian rule, however, was not accompanied by a reversion to the pre-coup political arrangements. The 1990 interim constitution instead reserved the position of Prime Minister for an ethnic Fijian and introduced a new electoral system under which voting was conducted exclusively along communal lines. Fijians cast their ballots in 37 separate constituencies, and Indo-Fijians voted in 27 designated ‘Indian’ constituencies. Fijian political dominance had been built into the political system. At elections held under the new system in 1992 and 1994, coup leader Sitiveni Rabuka was returned as prime Minister.

In a striking turnaround in the mid-1990s, Rabuka initiated a review of the 1990 constitution. The new 1997 constitution reversed many of the discriminatory provisions of the 1990 constitution, including the ethnic imbalance in seat distribution and the reservation of the position of Prime Minister for an ethnic Fijian. It also provided for power sharing, under a provision that allows all parties with more than 10% of seats to participate in cabinet.

2.2 Recent Ethnic Conflict

At the first elections held under this new system, the Fiji Labour Party secured an absolute majority, winning 37 of the 71 seats. For the first time, an Indo-Fijian - Mahendra Chaudhry - took the position of Prime Minister at the head of a coalition government that included several smaller Fijian parties. That government lasted only a year in office. On its

anniversary, May 19th 2000, a group of indigenous Fijian extremists led by George Speight stormed parliament, taking the Prime Minister and most of his cabinet hostage. The Royal Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) encircled the parliamentary compound, laying siege to the rebels inside, and the President, Ratu Mara, declared martial law.

Ten days later, on 29th May, the Royal Fiji Military Forces decreed the constitution abrogated and removed President Mara from office. In July, they installed an all-Fijian 'interim' administration, led by former banker Laisenia Qarase, as well as a new President and vice-president. Speight was eventually arrested and, after pleading guilty to charges of treason, imprisoned for life.

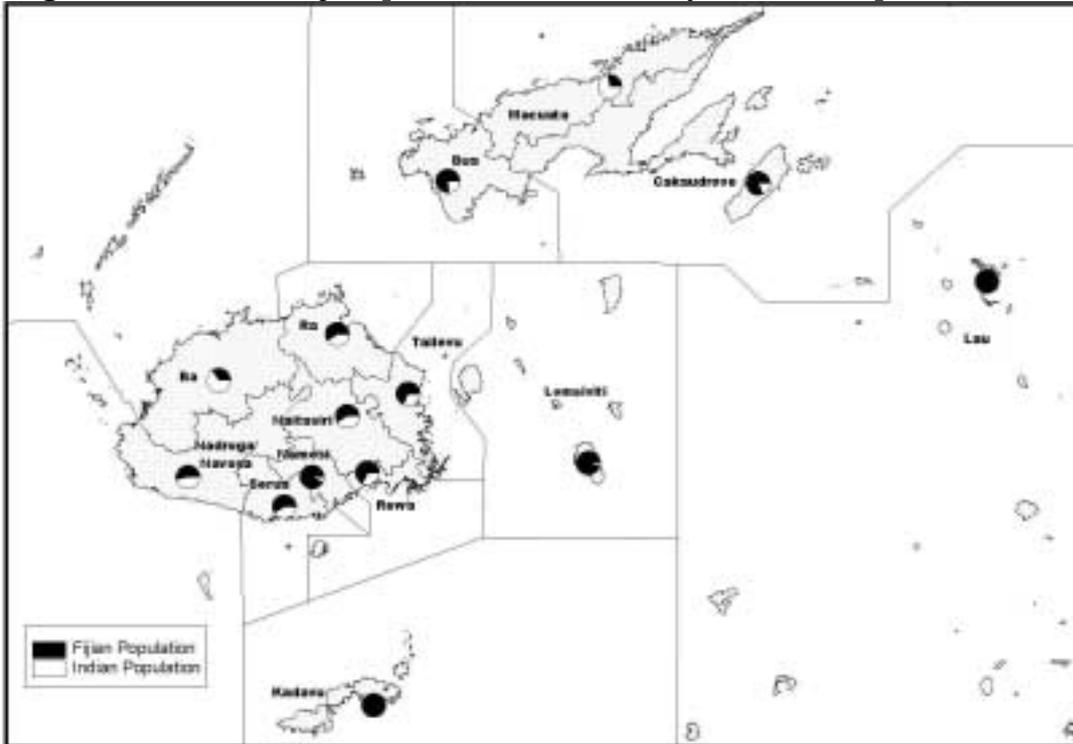
In a landmark case in March 2001, Fiji's Court of Appeal ruled that the 1997 constitution had not been legally abrogated, and remained in force. Both the President and the Qarase-led government accepted the decision, and responded by calling fresh elections in August 2001. At those elections, a newly formed party led by Qarase emerged victorious, backed by the majority of Fijian voters. George Speight was able to win a seat from his prison cell, although this was subsequently forfeited owing to his inability to attend sittings of the house¹². The Fiji Labour Party, still led by Mahendra Chaudhry, obtained 27 seats in the 71-member parliament. Mahendra Chaudhry refused to accept the position of leader of the opposition on the grounds that his party is, owing to the constitutional provisions for power-sharing, entitled to be in cabinet. The consequent legal case is currently on appeal, and awaiting a Supreme Court judgement, with the Qarase-led government reluctant to accept the Labour Party into cabinet.

2.3. Distribution and composition of ethnic groups.

At the last census in 1996, Fiji had a population of 772,655, comprising 51% indigenous Fijians and 44% Indo-Fijians¹³. Extrapolating forwards based on respective 1986-96 rates of population growth suggests that the population in 2002 is now divided 54% ethnic Fijian and 40% Indo-Fijian. Known migration rates for the two different communities suggest that this, if anything, underestimates the relative numerical increase in the ethnic Fijian population. Ethnicity is recorded 'as reported by the participants without interference by the interviewer'¹⁴.

Figure 2.1 shows that relatively more rapid population increase during the early part of the 20th century led to Fiji Indians forming the majority after 1945. Nevertheless, falling indigenous Fijian death-rates and rising birth-rates made clear even then that this lead was only temporary, a conclusion supported by early post-war population projections. The sharp reversal of these positions in the mid-1980s was primarily connected with an upturn in Indo-Fijian overseas migration in the wake of the May 1987 military coup. Some 75,000 Indo-Fijians have migrated since the mid-1980s (around 20% of the total Indo-Fijian population), destined mainly for North America, Australia and New Zealand.

Figure 2.2 Provincial Fiji Population Distribution by Ethnic Group, 1996.



Source; Fiji Government, 1996 Population and Housing census.

Figure 2.2 shows the ethnic distribution of the Fijian and Indo-Fijian resident populations in Fiji's 14 provinces (it does not show the small Polynesian island of Rotuma to the far northwest of the Fiji group). Indo-Fijians are numerically concentrated in the main sugar-producing areas of western Viti Levu and northern Vanua Levu (the provinces of Ba and Macuata). Ethnic Fijians predominate on all the smaller outer islands, in the eastern provinces of Viti Levu and in the Southern and Western provinces of Vanua Levu.

Fiji's third largest group, the so-called 'general' voters comprise a heterogeneous collection of different groups, defined primarily by their non-inclusion in the Fijian or Indian electoral rolls. Until the 1990 constitution, other Pacific Islanders were included in the Fijian electoral rolls. Under the 1990 and 1997 constitutions, they are counted as 'general voters'. These include the descendants of indentured labourers brought from the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (formerly New Hebrides) in the 19th century, settlers from Banaba (formerly the phosphate-rich Ocean Island) and Tuvalu, as well as Polynesians mainly from Tonga and Samoa. Fiji also possesses a minority European and part-European population, although numbers of Fiji citizens of straight European descent have declined throughout the 20th century. The growing Chinese immigrant population is also included under the 'general' or 'other' rubric. The Fiji Immigration authorities oblige incoming and departing residents and permit holders to classify themselves according to race.

Indigenous Fijians

Indigenous Fijians form the majority of the country's population. Officially, around 60% live in the rural areas, mostly in small closely-knit villages and often reliant on the pursuit of subsistence agriculture or small-scale cash-cropping. All Fijians are listed on the *vola ni kawa bula* (register of native births), normally on a patrilineal basis, which provides native land rights based on *mataqali* (clan) membership. Ethnic Fijians are 99% Christian, predominantly Methodist, although there are also substantial Catholic, and smaller Seventh Day Adventist and Mormon communities. Important differences exist between east and west Viti Levu (the country's largest island), and between mainland Viti Levu and the heavily Tongan-influenced Lau group of islands, in the extreme eastern part of Fiji.

Data available from the 1990-91 Household Income and Expenditure surveys suggests that ethnic Fijian average household incomes remain 20% lower than Indo-Fijian households, and *per capita* incomes 24% lower (see table 2.2, columns 1 and 2). Inequality, however, was much sharper among Indo-Fijians (see columns 3 and 4).

Table 2.2; *Average Weekly Income by Ethnicity, 1990-91*

	Average Household Income	Average Per Capita Income	Top 10% Average Household Income	Bottom 10% Average Household Income
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Indigenous Fijian	\$F174	\$F38	\$F537	\$F38
Indo-Fijian	\$218	\$F50	\$F914	\$F32
Others	\$F271	\$F67	n/a	n/a

Source: *Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 1990-91*, cited in Ahlburg, D.A. 'Income Distribution and Poverty', UNDP, Fiji, 1996 & 'Fiji Poverty Report', UNDP, 1997, p25, tables 9 & 10.

Notes: \$F1= around US\$0.46 cents.

Indo-Fijians

Indo-Fijians are 95% Hindu or Muslim, although a small but growing Christian community exists (5%)¹⁵. Owing to the distribution of recruiting stations during the indenture period, a majority of Indo-Fijians are descended from those who embarked from Calcutta, in India's West Bengal province, although most of these were in fact recruited in poorer inland provinces. From 1903 onwards, a recruiting station was opened at Madras, although again the true origin of those migrants was usually inland¹⁶. Divisions between north and south Indians, and between Muslims and Hindus, have acquired political significance as regards the distribution of ministerial portfolios or educational facilities and there have been occasional demands for separate Muslim representation. Descendants of later free migrants, often from Gujarat or the Punjab, occupy a distinct position, both in terms of social class, predominantly urban experience and lesser contact with the ethnic Fijian part of the population.

Rural Indo-Fijian settlements tend to involve scattered homesteads and are, necessarily, more integrated into the cash economy. Around 83% of Fiji's total land area remains under native tenure, and cannot be bought and sold. 12% is Crown land (owned and often leased by the government), and the remaining 5% is held freehold. The leasing of native lands under the quasi-statutory Native Land Trust Board was, until recently, regulated under the 1976 Agricultural Landlords and Tenants Act (ALTA). The expiry of ALTA leases resulted in the eviction of thousands of Indo-Fijian farmers during 1997-2001. Successive governments have favoured returning crown lands to indigenous owners. An alternative approach would have been to use crown lands to resettle Indo-Fijian farmers, while providing greater incentives for indigenous farmers to continue leasing native lands. Governments have failed to initiate a process of resettlement on good quality lands and restructuring in the agricultural sector towards the production of higher yield crops. The longstanding focus on the sugar industry is likely to diminish in future years as European Union subsidies are wound down.

Rotumans

Rotuma is an island in the extreme northwest of the Fiji group, with closer cultural affinities with the Polynesian islands to Fiji's east than to the prominently Melanesian groups to Fiji's west. Only around a third of Rotumans live on the island. Most have moved to other parts of Fiji, particularly to the main island of Viti Levu.

In the 1930s, many Rotumans migrated to work in Fiji's largest gold mine on mainland Viti Levu. More recently, Rotumans have been strongly represented in skilled professional occupations, particularly as doctors and lawyers. Those on the island have become reliant on flows of remittances from family members who have migrated to other parts of Fiji or overseas.

Since 1990, the island of Rotuma has had separate parliamentary representation. The 1997 constitution provides for a senator from Rotuma, and entrenches the Rotuma Act and Rotuma Lands Act.

Indigenous Fijian ethno-nationalist politics has regularly been articulated as a defence of Fijian *and* Rotuman political ascendancy, and some Rotumans were prominent in post-1987 coup governments.

Banabans

People from Ocean Island (Banaba) were resettled in Fiji from 1945 onwards. Phosphate had been discovered on Banaba in 1900, prompting the British government to annex the island and, in 1916, incorporate it into the Gilbert and Ellice Islands protectorate. As on nearby Nauru, phosphate mining became the mainstay of the Banaban economy and destroyed the islands' limited agricultural potential.

In 1945, the British Phosphate Commission (BPC) purchased Rabi Island, off the coast of Fiji's second largest island Vanua Levu, for Banaban resettlement. Between 1945 and 1995, the Banaban community on Rabi grew from 1,003 to over 5,000. The Banaban Settlement Ordinance of 1945 provided for Rabi's administration through a separate island council, although resettled Banabans were otherwise subject to Fiji law. The British Phosphate

Commission (BPC) provided modest annuity payments, bonuses and royalties to the Rabi people via the Banaban Trust Fund. In the 1970s, Banabans initiated legal action against the British government for failure to settle compensation claims. The High Court in London censured the British government in 1977, compelling the government and BPC to reach a F\$10 million settlement. Those funds are regulated through the Banaban Settlement Act, which is entrenched in Fiji's 1997 constitution, as are Banaban land rights on Rabi¹⁷.

Aid dependency and poor financial management have led to deteriorating living standards for the Banaban community on Rabi. After misappropriations of funds in the 1980s and a failure to meet debts in 1992, the Rabi Island Council was briefly dissolved by the Fiji government. Banabans remains one of Fiji's most disadvantaged and politically marginalised communities. Affirmative action programmes for indigenous Fijian and Rotuman communities in the aftermath of the 1987 and 2000 coups have not been targeted at Banaban peoples.

A smaller community from Tuvalu (the former Ellice Islands) also resettled in Fiji.

Chinese

Chinese migration to Fiji increased after the end of indenture in 1916, with many migrants providing labour in the inter-war banana industry. Further waves of migration continued in the post-World War Two period, although many of these earlier settlers left around the time of independence.

Post-1987 coup governments showed some support for Chinese immigration, and the Chinese migrant population has been steadily increasing. Established rural Chinese settlers are regularly involved in market-gardening, often on lands leased from native owners. Newer migrants are frequently employed by the earlier generation, for example in Fiji's garment industry.

More than 40% of economically active Chinese were found in 1996 to be employed as legislators, professionals, senior officials and technicians, as compared with 15% for indigenous Fijians and 22% for Indo-Fijians¹⁸. A number of part-Chinese citizens have assumed prominent positions in Fiji's business world and in government.

Europeans and part-Europeans

Fiji's European¹⁹ population are descendants of planters, traders and beachcombers who arrived in Fiji during the 19th century, or of the colonial officials who governed the colony from 1874-1970. They formed the colony's economic elite and secured direct representation in the legislative Council from 1904.

Inter-marriage and the birth of children to mixed race marriages led to a steady increase in the part-European, as opposed to European, population. Part-Europeans have often become integrated into Fijian society, although they were removed from the Fijian electoral rolls after the 1987 coup and re-classified as 'general voters'.

Other Pacific Islanders

Some descendants of Ni-Vanuatu and Solomon Islander indentured labourers brought to Fiji in the 19th century remained in Fiji, and today are amongst the most marginalized communities in Fiji. Many inhabit impoverished squatter settlements in Fiji's urban centres, and popular prejudice associates Solomon Islander descent with low social status.

There are around 8,000 people of Solomon Islands origin in Fiji. The largest settlement, numbering around 2,000 is at Wailoku, on the capital, Suva's, outskirts situated on lands leased from the Anglican Church. There has been considerable intermarriage, but the community remains economically and socially disadvantaged.

Melanesians were removed from the Fijian rolls in the 1990 constitution and lumped together with general voters. They have no explicit constitutional recognition.

2.4 Constitutional provisions, political rights and ethnic inequality.

Fiji's 1997 constitution endorses the 'paramountcy of Fijian interests', but as a 'protective principle' rather than as a charter for political dominance²⁰.

The 1997 constitution involved a major departure from the discriminatory provisions of the 1990 constitution. The position of Prime Minister was no longer reserved for an ethnic Fijian, and the distribution of parliamentary seats was shifted away from the strictly communally-based system that had prevailed under the 1990 constitution.

Parliamentary representation nevertheless remained predominantly communally based. Forty-six of the 71 seats in parliament are occupied by members returned from restricted ethnic franchise constituencies, and twenty-five are occupied by members returned from 'open' constituencies where all registered electors vote together. Of the 46 communal seats, 23 are reserved for ethnic Fijians, 19 for Indo-Fijians, 3 for general voters and one for Rotumans, a distribution that was roughly in line with mid-1990s population distribution, although general voters remained over-represented as compared to their share in the overall population. Members of parliament for each of these groups have powers of veto over any changes to the number of seats allocated to their group. Such veto powers may, in future, obstruct necessary changes in seat distribution owing to population change. Retention of communal seats and racially-based electoral rolls, and separate voting queues during polling, tends to reinforce Fiji's ethnically polarised voting patterns. Both the 1975 Street Commission and the 1995-96 CRC recommended moving away from racially-based electoral rolls, which in any case no longer serve their original function²¹.

Fiji's President (the head of state) is appointed by the Bose Levu Vakaturaga (BLV - Great Council of Chiefs), after consultation with the Prime Minister²². The BLV also retains other important constitutional powers. The BLV advises the President regarding the appointment of 14 members of the 32-member senate (the upper house), while the Council of Rotuma advises the President as regards the appointment an additional member²³.

Protections relating to Fijian ownership of land, and relating to legislation covering the leasing of native land, are built into the constitution, as are laws protecting minority groups from Rotuma and Banaba²⁴.

The 1997 constitution provided for the introduction of a compulsory preferential voting system in a deliberate effort to encourage moderation and inter-ethnic conciliation between ethnic Fijian and Indo-Fijian politicians. It has not been greatly successful in accomplishing this objective. Moderate politicians fared poorly at both the 1999 and 2001 polls. The 2001 polls saw a dramatic fall in the turnout, down from 90.1% in 1999 to 76.8% in 2001. A complex ticket voting system was adopted, enabling voters to either rank candidates in order of preference or simply tick next to a party symbol and delegate decisions about their preferences to political parties. This led to a sizeable increase in invalid voting – which had fluctuated at around 2-3% of the vote under the 1970-1987 constitution. In 1999, 8.7% of votes were declared invalid. In 2001, 12.1% votes were disallowed. The Commonwealth Observer Group at the 2001 elections concluded that ‘the present electoral system should be reviewed, ... the present system is too complex and results in too many invalid ballots’²⁵. There have also been calls for the voting age to be reduced from 21 to 18.

The 1997 constitution provides for multi-party cabinet. All parties with more than 10% of seats are entitled to positions in cabinet. This was not one of the recommendations of the original constitutional review commission (CRC) that set out the framework for the 1997 constitution. It was a provision that was subsequently added by a Joint Parliamentary Select Committee that met to deliberate on the CRC proposals. It was intended to guarantee power-sharing between parties representing the two major communities, and to avoid the ‘winner takes all’ electoral outcomes that prevailed under earlier constitutions. Opinion is divided as to whether compulsory power-sharing provisions are workable in Fiji. These remain largely untested since the post-August 2001 government has refused to abide by those provisions and because the FLP had an absolute majority in the May-1999-May-2000 Peoples coalition government.

Inequalities in private and public sector employment have long been a politically controversial issue in Fiji. Indo-Fijian strength in the business and retail sectors, and in the sugar industry, has led to ethnic Fijian calls for predominance in the civil service. Even under British colonial rule, ethnic Fijians took the larger share of civil service positions. There was some shift towards greater balance after independence, which was again reversed in favour of indigenous Fijian preponderance in the wake of the 1987 coup. Fiji’s military forces are 99% ethnic Fijian. Indo-Fijians are reluctant to join the military, in part because of its role in the 1987 coup and the events of May-July 2000. Fiji’s police force is 70% indigenous Fijian, although the judiciary has greater Indo-Fijian representation at lower levels. A large number of expatriate circuit judges serve on Fiji’s Court of Appeal and Supreme Court.

The current government’s ‘Blueprint for affirmative action for indigenous Fijians and Rotumans’ aims to encourage greater employment of ethnic Fijians in both the public service and the private sector. Soft loans to indigenous Fijian business enterprises and infrastructural developments targeted at majority indigenous parts of the country have also characterised both post-1987 and post-2000 government policy. During the previous wave of affirmative action policies in the 1990s, serious irregularities became apparent in the distribution of funds, most prominently in the mid-1990s collapse of the National Bank of Fiji under the

strain of at least F\$220 million in bad loans. In early 2001, serious irregularities in the distribution of farming equipment to indigenous villages by the Agriculture Ministry were revealed. Indo-Fijians, some of whom are the poorest of all Fiji's citizens, have been excluded from both post-1987 and post-2000 affirmative action programmes.

In education, there have also been moves to grant greater funding advantages to Fijian schools, a position widely contested on the grounds that increasing numbers of ethnic Fijian parents, particularly in urban areas, send their children to Indo-Fijian schools.

The borderline between the two major ethnic groups' languages has become hazy. A controversy is currently underway concerning the first published book to appear written in Fiji Hindi, a locally developed language with stronger affinities to the Fijian language than classical Hindi. Some prominent Indo-Fijian figures have sought to defend the position of classical Hindi, protesting that Fiji Hindi 'lacks grammar' and should not be used in the educational curriculum. The Fijian language has many dialects, although the Bauan dialect, spoken in the eastern part of Viti Levu was developed, under the influence of 19th century missionaries, into the accepted national language. English is also accepted as one of the national languages, and is widely used in primary, secondary and tertiary education. The University of the South Pacific, a regional institution serving 14 of the South Pacific Island nations, conducts teaching in English.

3.0 The Solomon Islands

The Solomon Islands comprises a cluster of six larger islands and around 900 smaller islands or islets. It has a relatively low GDP *per capita* as compared with the eastern and northern Pacific nations, a high degree of dependence on subsistence agriculture and one of the fastest rates of population growth in the world²⁶.

The group has a land area of only around 30,407 sq. km stretched over sea area of 1,280,000 sq. km. It is situated in the tropics, and prone to heavy rainfall as well as occasional earthquakes and hurricanes. The larger volcanic islands tend to have forest-clad mountains, although the group also includes a considerable number of smaller low-lying atolls.

Figure 3.1



Source: GIS, Geography Department, University of the South Pacific.

The islands were settled in the Austronesian wave of migration out of South-east Asia across the Pacific, probably around 4,000 years ago, although the presence of some pre-Austronesian or Papuan languages in parts of the group (as in Papua New Guinea to the West) implies some considerably earlier settlement.

The Solomon Islands has sizeable Polynesian and Micronesian (I-Kiribati or Gilbertese) minorities, and smaller Chinese and European groups. The majority Melanesian community is divided amongst several islands, and inter-island migration combined with lack of migrant

land rights has resulted in serious difficulties for settler communities particularly on Guadalcanal and in the Western Province.

Table 3.1 *Solomon Islands Population by Ethnic Group.*

	1999	%
Melanesian	386,745	94.5
Polynesian	12,257	3.0
Micronesian (Gilbertese)	4,906	1.2
European	669	0.2
Chinese	464	0.1
Others ¹	4,001	1.0
Total	409,042	100

¹ Includes those recorded as 'not stated' in the 1999 census.

Sources; Solomon Islands Government, *Report on the 1999 Population and Housing Census*, Basic tables and census description, Statistics Office, Honiara, 2000.

A secessionist movement sprang up in the western part of the group around the time of independence in 1978, and state government was a key demand of the Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM) on Guadalcanal. The national government is currently negotiating a shift towards federation.

3.1. Historical Background

Internal cleavages within the Solomon Islands are closely connected with the uneven development of the country under British colonial rule (1893-1978). The Solomon Islands experienced minimal plantation development before the 20th century. However, the country became an important source of indentured labourers bound for plantations in Queensland, Fiji and Samoa, particularly during the 1880s and 1890s²⁷. The bulk of those labourers came from the relatively resource-poor island of Malaita. In 1911, the government of the British Solomon Islands protectorate (BSIP) abolished external recruitment. Instead, circular labour migration within the Solomon Islands group was encouraged by the imposition of head taxes to be paid in cash. Malaitans made up around 68% of the group's inter-war internal labour migrants, many of who travelled to work on copra plantations on other islands²⁸.

During World War Two, Guadalcanal became a major focus of the Pacific War as a result of Japanese efforts to construct an airbase on the island. U.S. marine and land forces launched a major and eventually victorious assault on Japanese positions. The former bombed out former capital at Tulagi was abandoned after the war in favour of a new capital built on the location of the large wartime US base at Honiara. Malaita escaped Japanese occupation, and American forces brought many Malaitans to work on Guadalcanal.

Inter-island migration continued to figure prominently after the Second World War. Migration from Malaita to work on the northern Guadalacanal Plains, the country's sole

large tract of arable land, became increasingly frequent, as did inward migration into Honiara.

Under colonial rule, inter-island migration had been restricted at times by limited duration passes required to be carried by labour migrants, and legislation empowering native courts to fine or imprison unauthorised migrants. Wage-levels also discouraged permanent settlement. 'Bachelors wages' ensured that labour migration primarily drew single adult males to Guadalcanal, as did the type of accommodation provided in the 'labour lines' of Honiara. Independence unleashed much larger levels of inter-island migration. The 1978 independence constitution specified that 'no person shall be deprived of his freedom of movement' and gave Solomon Islanders 'the right to reside in any part of the Solomon Islands'²⁹.

Table 3.2. *Main Components of Net Lifetime Inter-Provincial Movement of Solomon Islanders*

Province	1970	1976	1986
Guadalcanal	} +8,627 (29.0% ¹)	+3,743 (19.7% ¹)	+7,263 (22.9% ¹)
Honiara Town Council		+5,573 (76.0% ¹)	+13,381 (71.8% ¹)
Malaita	-8,657 (15.5% ²)	-9,499 (16.4% ²)	-17,665 (22.4% ²)

Notes: ¹ In-Migrants as a % of population enumerated in the province. ² Out-migrants as a % of population born in the province.

Source: *Report on the Census of Population, 1986, 2B, Data Analysis*, Groenewegen, K, Statistics Office, Ministry of Finance, Honiara, 1989, tables IV.3 & IV.4.

Table 3.2 shows the main components of net lifetime movement of Solomon Islanders between provinces between 1970 and 1986. It shows a steady increase in the outward movement of Malaitans. These formed the majority of inward migrants to rural Guadalcanal and the Honiara District Council area. Inward migrants from other islands residing in the rural parts of Guadalcanal stood at 19.7% of the rural population in 1976 but had reached 22.9% in 1986. By 1999, 65% of those employed on the large Solomon Islands Plantations Ltd (SIPL) palm oil plantations were from Malaita and another 16% from the eastern province of Temotu³⁰. By 1986, 72% of Honiara's population were inter-island migrants, and only 4.6% of the town's inhabitants were indigenous people from Guadalcanal³¹. Malaitans took many of the top jobs in the civil service. Squatter settlements proliferated, mainly inhabited by Malaitans, on the outskirts of Honiara.

Population pressures also encouraged resettlement in other parts of the group: from the Reef islands to Santa Cruz and Makira; from Tikopia to Makira and Yandina; from Sikiana to Guadalcanal and Isabel; from Rennell and Bellona to Yandina. Natural disasters have also prompted resettlement. An earthquake in 1977 and a cyclone in 1986 both seriously hit Guadalcanal's rugged 'weather coast' prompting the government to resettle people at Aruligo on the north of Guadalcanal, near Honiara.

3.2 Recent Ethnic Conflict.

In late 1998, a rebel group emerged on Guadalcanal, initially calling itself the Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army and later the Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM). The IFM comprised mainly younger islanders, many of whom were angry about their elders' willingness to sell lands to incoming settlers and intent on dislodging Malaitan settlers from the northern Guadalcanal plains. Frictions between Guale and Malaitan youth on Guadalcanal had been building up for years, and there had been a series of high profile murders followed by demands for compensation since the 1970s.

The IFM began driving Malaitan settlers from the northern plains, while Honiara was gradually transformed into a virtual Malaitan enclave. The 1999 census of population was conducted in the midst of the crisis on Guadalcanal. It estimated that by mid-1999, 35,309 people (58.6% of the Guadalcanal population) had been displaced. On Malaita, the 1999 census enumerators found 12,676 people who had previously resided on Guadalcanal, and another 2,687 displaced people from rural Guadalcanal were found within Honiara, many of whom must have been Malaitans from the northern plains³². Settlers from Rennell and Bellona, and Temotu Province and elsewhere, were also displaced.

The consequences for the Solomon Islands economy, already hit by a slowdown in log exports in the aftermath of the East Asia financial crisis, were devastating. SIPL closed down permanently, as eventually did the only recently commenced Gold Ridge gold mine and the Taiyo Fishing Company in the western part of the island.

On June 5th 2000, a Malaitan militia group, the Malaita Eagle Forces in a 'joint operation' with members of the security forces, seized control of the capital, Honiara, and deposed the elected government of Bartholomew Ulufa'alu. Ulufa'alu was himself Malaitan, but his government had been reliant on support from Guale MPs in several previously attempted no confidence votes. Malaitan militants and the opposition in parliament accused him of failing to stand up to the guerrillas in rural Guadalcanal and demanded greater compensation for dispossessed Malaitans. Three weeks later after the takeover, parliament reassembled and, under some duress, elected a new government headed by Mannaseh Sogavare.

On 15th October 2000, an Australian-brokered peace agreement was reached between the IFM and MEF leaders at 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'³³. While conflict abated on the northern plains, some dissident groups remain active.

Elections held in late 2001 saw a new government, led by Sir Allen Kemekeza returned to office, but the deteriorating law and order situation and top-level corruption, particularly centred on the distribution of Taiwanese aid-funded compensation payments to dispossessed Malaitans, combined to make this a fragile peace.

3.3. Distribution and composition of ethnic groups.

The population of the Solomon Islands, according to the 1999 census, was 409,042. Solomon Islanders are mostly Melanesian, although sizeable Polynesian communities inhabit many of the outlying islands (see table 3.1). Other minorities include resettled groups from Kiribati (the former Gilbert Islands) and migrants from China. Ethnicity is recorded in censuses of population according to the self-identification principle³⁴.

Melanesians

Melanesians comprise the overwhelming majority (94.5%) of the overall Solomon Islands population. They typically live in small closely-knit clan-based communities, although broader divisions exist between 'bush' (interior) and 'saltwater' (coastal) peoples, the latter having a greater historical experience of greater accessibility to traders and external influences. The eastern islands, including Malaita and the islands of Temotu province, are relatively resource-poor, a factor that helps to explain relatively high levels of overseas labour migration. The Western Islands possess strong cultural affinities with neighbouring Bougainville and Buka Islands, although an 1886 Anglo-German colonial agreement incorporated those islands into Papua New Guinea (contemporary PNG's Northern Solomons Province). The Melanesian 'big man' style of political leadership contrasts with the more frequently hereditary chiefly leadership characteristic of the Polynesian islands. Big men assume power based on accumulation of wealth and influence, and are more frequently dislodged from leadership positions³⁵. Within the parliamentary arena, this feature helps to explain an exceptionally high turnover of incumbent Melanesian members of parliament.

The Solomon Islands' Melanesian population is predominantly Christian (around 90%), with the remaining 10%, mainly found in the interior of Malaita and Guadalcanal, following traditional religious customs³⁶. The group contains both matrilineal and patrilineal societies. On Guadalcanal, Santa Isabel, Makira, Russell islands and Nggela land is customarily inherited on the mother's side. On Choiseul, Malaita, Rennell and Bellona, Shortlands, Tikopia and Ulawa, land is inherited on the father's side.

Polynesians

The Solomon Islands group has several outlying Polynesian islands settled centuries ago in waves of migration from the east. Polynesians are in the majority on Rennell and Bellona, Ontong Java, Sikiana, Tikopia, Anuta, Reef Islands and Duff Islands. They form around 3% of the nation's population. Some resentment against Melanesian people exists among Polynesians owing to Melanesian dominance in government, and the political marginalisation of Polynesian politicians³⁷.

Many Polynesians have migrated, particularly from relatively resource-poor Temotu province and Rennell and Bellona, to other parts of the group, including rural Guadalcanal and Honiara. The Isatabu Freedom Movement targeted Polynesian settlers on the Guadalcanal Plains during the land evictions of 1998-2000.

Polynesians form a significantly larger share of the Honiara population (6.7%) as compared to the national population (3%), and the number of urbanised Polynesians has increased since independence.

Table 3.3 *Honiara Population by Ethnic Group*

	1970		1976		1986	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Melanesians	8,621	77.0	12,051	80.7	26,255	86.3
Polynesians	616	5.5	875	5.9	2,032	6.7
Gilbertese	360	3.2	347	2.3	871	2.9
Chinese	482	4.3	368	2.5	305	1.0
European	796	7.1	914	6.1	719	2.4
All others	326	2.9	387	2.6	231	0.8
Total	11,191	100.0	14,942	100.0	30,413	100.0

Source: Popiulesin Blong Honiara, Olketa Popiulesin Map Blong 1986 Sensis, A.C. Walsh.

Micronesians (Gilbertese)

Gilbertese (or I-Kiribati) inward migration occurred under British colonial rule, when the BSIP and Gilbert and Ellice Islands colony were jointly administered under the Western Pacific High Commission. Many came from the drought-prone Phoenix Islands, commencing in the 1950s, and were settled in the western part of the Solomon Islands group owing to its low population density.

Migrant groups were settled at Titiana on Gizo Island and offshore islands around Gizo further west in the Shortland Islands (1962) and at Wagina in Choiseul Province (1963-64). Later unassisted migrants came from Kiribati in the 1960s, mainly as public servants, students or individuals in search of employment. Most of these later migrants settled in or near Honiara, including one group who purchased freehold land at Red Beach, 19 kilometres east of Honiara (These people were also evicted by the IFM during the troubles on Guadalcanal). Further inward migration from Kiribati was halted after 1971, when the Governing Council restricted automatic entry rights for children of established settlers.

Much Gilbertese settlement was on poor quality land, and insecurity regarding land rights restricted investment in land improvements. One consequence was a tendency to seek an alternative to subsistence-based livelihoods or land-dependent small-scale cash cropping through an orientation towards commercial employment (e.g. involvement in the logging industry) and educational advancement. The Gilbertese share of the Honiara population (2.9%) is well above its share in the national population (1.2%) reflecting a marked movement towards the urban centres. Relatively strong performance in these areas triggered some resentment among the indigenous population, as one Gilbertese author explained:

'fear or jealousy, is caused by the Gilbertese migrants who are now holding a number of important posts both in government and commerce. The immigrants seem to stick with work and do their jobs well and so get promoted. This is only to be expected from those whose jobs are their source of livelihood'³⁸

There has been considerable Gilbertese-Melanesian inter-marriage, and the Kiribati-born share of the Gilbertese population has been steadily declining. Although land rights remain insecure, the Solomon Islands government did, just prior to independence, grant citizenship rights to established Gilbertese settlers.

Europeans

The Solomon Islands' European population has been steadily declining since independence. The number of Europeans peaked at 1,590 in 1976 and fell to 669 recorded at the 1999 census, reflecting the post-independence localisation of government administration. Around two-thirds of the 1999 European population are resident in the capital, Honiara. Further departures occurred in the aftermath of the 1999 census.

Chinese

From 1910 onwards, Chinese settlers arrived in the Solomon Islands, often to work as domestics or in the trade stores at the former capital at Tulagi, or on trading ships. After the First World War, further immigration was restricted, although there were some new arrivals during the post-war years. Honiara's Chinatown was the destination of many of these post-war migrants. At independence, the majority of Chinese had the status of 'British protected persons'. Many had come from Hong Kong and were therefore already citizens of the UK and colonies. Those from mainland China mostly acquired naturalisation as UK citizens.

Chinese population levels fell after independence, with most of those remaining located in Honiara, mainly in the Chinatown district. Further Chinese immigration is restricted via Immigration Department controls over work permits. Chinese shopkeepers, businessmen and political appointees have been targeted by Melanesian militants over recent years.

3.3 Constitutional provisions, political rights and ethnic inequality.

The 1978 constitution did not contain discriminatory provisions against minorities or provide for any special representation for different ethnic groups. Controversies did occur prior to independence, both about land rights and citizenship. There was considerable Melanesian support for restricting overseas migrant land and citizenship rights. The Solomon Islands Government's constitutional advisor during the independence negotiations, Yash Ghai, observed, British concerns were primarily intended to 'minimise tensions in British immigration policies' by closing off avenues for British citizenship claims, even if this was at the expense of conceding political inequality or weakening of land rights provisions³⁹. Eventually, however, the Solomon Islands government conceded full citizenship rights, upon application, to longstanding Gilbertese settlers and provided for Gilbertese retention of lands on 75-year leases⁴⁰.

Controversies at the 1987 constitutional review centred on provisions regarding freedom of movement, and the role these played in facilitating inter-island migration particularly by Malaitans to Guadalcanal and other parts of the group. This was also a key issue during the 1998-2000 disturbances, during which time most of those settlers on Guadalcanal and some of those in the west were evicted. Gilbertese groups in the Western province, who are reasonably well integrated with Melanesian communities, retained their lands. It is highly unlikely that the Solomon Islands will return to the previous *status quo*. Most evicted settlers have not returned to their previous homes.

The contemporary shift towards state government poses serious minority issues. Federal constitutions drawn up by separate provinces may be less hospitable to minority groups than those negotiated on the national stage, back in the 1970s, as regards land and settlement rights. Efforts to protect the position of minorities during the constitutional review process need to be placed at the centre of negotiations.

The position of Honiara in a new federal Solomon Islands also raises serious concerns. As table 3.3 shows, Polynesian, Gilbertese and Chinese minorities are particularly concentrated in the capital, a process that has been intensified since the land evictions of 1998-2000 since many settlers on the northern plains subsequently relocated into Honiara. The country lacks the resources or infrastructure to again shift the national capital to a new location. The likelihood is that the shift towards federation is accompanied by some 'internationalization' of Honiara, as a capital territory, a shift which will, again, need to be accompanied by provisions for the protection of the capital's minority groups.

Notes

¹ The 1997 constitution uses the term 'Indo-Fijian' to refer to Fiji citizens who are descendants of settlers from the Indian sub-continent.

² The major exceptions are French Polynesia, which has an 11% white population and Hawaii, where the indigenous population has been demographically overwhelmed by settlers. Some of the Micronesian islands in the northern Pacific also have large immigrant communities, often from mainland Asia and the Philippines.

³³ Around a quarter of the indigenous population died of the measles in 1875. Declining indigenous population levels were not arrested until the 1920s.

⁴ Some land sold prior to 1874 was recognised as freehold land, and during 1904-09 the colonial administration briefly adopted a 'waste lands' policy allowing further sales. Consequently, only 5% of the total land area remains freehold to this day.

⁵ K.L. Gillion, *Fiji's Indian Migrants; A History to the End of Indenture in 1920* (London, Wellington & New York, Oxford University Press, 1962); France, P. 'The Founding of an Orthodoxy: Sir Arthur Gordon and the Doctrine of the Fijian Way of Life', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 77, (1), 1968; P. France, *The Charter of the Land: Custom and Colonisation in Fiji* (London, Wellington & New York, Oxford University Press, 1969).

⁶ T.J. MacNaught, *The Fijian Colonial Experience: A Study of the Neo-traditional Order under British Colonial Rule prior to World War II* (Canberra & Miami, ANU, 1982).

⁷ Lal, B. 'Labouring Men & Nothing More: Some Problems of Indian Indenture in Fiji', in *Indentured Labour in the British Empire, 1834-1920* (ed) Kay Saunders, Croon helm, London & Canberra, 1984.

⁸ Gillion, K.L. *The Fiji Indians: Challenge to European Dominance, 1920-46*, Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1977, p130.

⁹ Norton, R, *Race and Politics in Fiji* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1977, Revised edition, 1990, 26-27, 55-56; Lal, BV. *Broken Waves; A History of the Fiji Islands in the Twentieth Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992, p 139-143. Such claims were also embraced by a meeting of Fiji's Council of Chiefs in November 1933. 'This Council records its strong and unanimous opinion that [in] Fiji, having been ceded to Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, Her Heirs and Successors, the immigrant population should neither directly nor indirectly have any part in the control or direction of matters affecting the interests of the Fijian race' (cited Ali 1986:12). Similarly, Fiji's leading mid-20th century chief, Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna, held that 'the democratic elective system has no place in a country where racial questions loom large' (cited Scarr 1988: 22-23).

¹⁰ Sitiveni Rabuka, cited in *Islands Business*, September 1987, p.7.

¹¹ The second coup was inspired by fears that negotiations aimed at restoring some form of constitutional democracy were derailing earlier 'coup objectives', see Rabuka, interview in *Islands Business*, October 1987, p.16.

¹² Speight had not at that time been convicted of treason. Hence, his eligibility to stand for election.

¹³ *Fiji Census of Population and Housing* (Suva: Parliamentary Paper 43, Bureau of Statistics, 1996).

¹⁴ *Fiji Census of Population and Housing* Bureau of Statistics, 1996, p8.

¹⁵ Paul Geraghty, 'The Ethnic Basis of Society in Fiji' in B.V. Lal and T.R. Vakatora eds., *Fiji in Transition*, Fiji Constitution Review Commission Research Papers, S.S.E.D., U.S.P., 1997, p9-10.

¹⁶ 75% Boarded ship in Calcutta, 25% in Madras.

¹⁷ *Constitution of the Republic of the Fiji Islands*, 1997, S. 185. (1). (g) & (h).

¹⁸ 1996 Census of Population and Housing.

¹⁹ The term 'European' is widely used in Fiji, and the rest of the Pacific, as a term embracing white people in general, and therefore includes those from Australia, New Zealand and North America.

²⁰ 1997 Constitution Ch. 2. S. 6. (g).

²¹ Racially-based rolls were initially backed by the British colonial authorities and indigenous Fijian chiefs primarily owing to a conviction that these 'protected' the indigenous population, in a context of more rapid growth in the Indo-Fijian population. This argument no longer holds, given the contemporary Fijian majority and more rapid increase in the Fijian population. Communal rolls lessen the need to appeal to voters of other ethnic groups.

²² Constitution of the Republic of the Fiji Islands, 1997, §90, p.58

²³ 1997 Constitution Ch 6. S.64.

²⁴ The 1997 Constitution provides that the support of nine of the fourteen members of the Senate nominated by the President is required for any amendments to the Constitution, Fijian Affairs, Native Land Trust Act, Native Lands Act, Agricultural Landlord and Tenants Act or acts relating to Rotuma or the Banabans on Rabi Island (Fiji Constitution 1997, §192 [4], p.144; §185, p.139; §64[1a], p.91)

²⁵ Commonwealth Secretariat, London, UK, September 2001

²⁶ Former rapid rates of increase are, however, clearly tailing off. Between 1931 and 1959 and 1959 and 1970, population growth accelerated from around 1% p.a. to around 2.6%. This acceleration continued from 1970-76 and 1976-86 respectively by 3.4% and 3.5% p.a. 1999 census figures imply some reduction, down to 3.1% p.a. Although still among the highest in the world, this pattern of acceleration, followed by reduction is widespread among late developing countries (falling crude birth rates were already witnessed between 1976 and 1986).

²⁷ 56% of Queensland's Melanesian recruits from 1890 to 1904 and 80% of Fiji's Melanesian recruits from 1890 to 1911 came from the Solomon Islands (Saunders, K *Workers in Bondage: the Origins and Bases of Unfree Labour in Queensland, 1824-1916*, Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1982; Jeff Siegel 'Origins of Pacific Island Labourers in Fiji', *Journal of Pacific History*, 20, 1, 1985, p46).

²⁸ Shlomowitz, R & Bedford, RD. 'The Internal labour Trade in the New Hebrides and Solomon Islands c1900-1941', *Journale de la Société des Oceanistes*, 86, 1988, table 7, p77

²⁹ Solomon Islands Constitution, 1978, p154.

³⁰ 'Message from SIPL to the people of the Solomon Islands', *Solomon Star*, 26th July 1999.

³¹ *Report on the Census of Population, 1986, 2B Data Analysis*, Groenewegan, K, Statistics Office, Ministry of Finance, Honiara, table IV.3. The 1999 census took place in the midst of the evictions on Guadalcanal and therefore does not provide more recent data regarding the extent of inward migration.

³² Solomon Islands Government, *Report on the 1999 Population and Housing Census*, Basic tables and census description, Statistics Office, Honiara, 2000, table B2.12-B2.14, pp129-135.

³³ An Agreement for the Cessation of Hostilities between the Malaita Eagle Force and the Isatabu Freedom Movement and for the Restoration of Peace and Ethnic Harmony in Solomon islands, <http://www.commerce.gov.sb/Others/Peace%20agreement.htm>.

³⁴ In the 1999 census, 'ethnicity is reported according to which ethnic group people felt they belonged to and no efforts were made to calculate the largest ethnic component is cases of mixed origin' (Solomon Islands Government, *Report on the 1999 Population and Housing Census*, Statistics Office, Honiara, 2000, p24). This contrasts slightly with previous treatment. 'Both in the 1986 and in the two previous censuses [1970 and 1976] enumerators were instructed to accept the ethnic origin of respondents as reported, *unless there were obvious errors*' (Solomon Islands 1986 Population census, Report 2B: Data Analysis, p12).

³⁵ The highly localised character of 'big man' leadership can be seen in the fact that, outside Honiara, no candidate has ever won a seat representing a different group of people (Alasia, S. 'Politics', in *Ples Blong Iumi: Solomon Islands, the Past Four Thousand Years*, Institute of Pacific Studies, USP, 1989, p137)

³⁶ Bennett, J. *Wealth of the Solomons: A History of a Pacific Archipelago, 1800-1978*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1987, p36

³⁷ Bennett, p333.

³⁸ Bobai, T, 'Gilbertese Settlement', in *land in Solomon Islands*, (eds) P Larmour *et al*, Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1979, p137.

³⁹ 'In that sense it was not motivated by a concern for the welfare of minorities. It preferred the automatic conferment of Solomon Islands citizenship to a choice for the applicant. It wanted them to lose their British citizenship, which they would not if they chose **not** to exercise their right to apply for Solomon islands citizenship' (Yash Ghai, 'The Making of the Independence Constitution', *Solomon Islands Politics*, Institute of Pacific Studies, (eds) Larmour, P & Tarua, S. USP, Suva, 1983, p47-8).

⁴⁰ 1978 Amendment to the Land and Titles Act.