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Ethnicity and Development: The Case of Fiji

Discussion Paper No. 46, October 1993
Ralph R. Premdas

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Preface

In 1989, UNRISD launched a major research project on Ethnic Conflict and Development. Since then 14 case studies have been carried out in countries experiencing ethnic conflicts in different regions of the world. The research has sought to examine:

- the conditions under which ethnic conflicts arise and sustain themselves;
- the roles of economic, cultural, social and political factors in shaping ethnic consciousness and claims;
- the effects of development processes, state policies and international politics on the dynamics of ethnic conflicts;
- the interests and goals of ethnic movements, and what kinds of strategies and ideologies they pursue;
- the reasons why some ethnic conflicts become violent while others are regulated within existing political and constitutional structures; and
- the mechanisms which can de developed to prevent, contain or resolve such conflicts.

This paper contains the principal findings of a larger study by Ralph Premdas on ethnic conflict and development in Fiji. It traces the historical origins of ethnic problems on the island, the key forces which have contributed to their intensification in recent years, the various attempts made to preserve balance and accommodation and the economic, political, social and psychological impacts of the crisis in ethnic relations since 1987. The key features of the ethnic equation are familiar from other bipolar societies. The indigenous Fijians and the immigrant Indians constitute the main ethnic groups each accounting for approximately 48 per cent of the population. The colonial policy reinforced the differences in language, religion and culture between the two communities through residential and educational segregation and distinctive economic and political roles for different communities. The Indians predominated in sugar cane cultivation, commerce, industry and the professions while the indigenous Fijians engaged in subsistence farming and occupied the majority of public sector jobs, including the armed forces. The colonial dispensation assured Fijians political paramountcy, land ownership and rule through indigenous institutions. In the process, it also shielded them from the modern economy and thus contributed to their subordinate economic status.

The onset of independence brought into the open some of the ethnic tensions which had been latent during the colonial era. These arose from the issues of political representation, access to land and to jobs in the public services and the modern sector. A series of compromises and accommodations among community leaders ensured a delicate balancing of ethnic interests for two decades. These comprised dilution of democratic principles to ensure continued control of the political system by the Fijians, leasehold security for Indian sugar cultivators and sharing of jobs in the public service. This balance was upset in the 1987 elections which resulted in the defeat of the Alliance Party controlled by the Fijian elite and the formation of the government by a coalition of the Fiji Labour Party and the Indian-based National Federation Party. The subsequent coup d'état led to a suppression of the civilian regime and the institution of an increasing range of discriminatory policies against Indians.

The costs of the breakdown in ethnic balance and accommodation have been serious. Politically, there has been a loss of régime legitimacy, destruction of democracy and violation of human rights. In the economic domain, unemployment and poverty have been intensified through decline in investment and tourism and through capital flight and brain drain. Growing realisation of these costs is contributing to renewed attempts to find enduring solutions to ethnic problems in Fiji.

The author of the paper, Ralph Premdas, teaches at the University of the West Indies and holds a research appointment at McGill University. The project on Ethnic Conflict and Development is co-ordinated by Rodolfo Stavenhagen, El Colegio de México.

October, 1993 Dharam Ghai
Director

Introduction: Development and Ethnicity

In the multi-ethnic states of the Third World, planned political change for development cannot succeed unless conceived through the prism of ethnicity. Developmental change cannot follow a simple linear path driven by neutral factors such as capital and technology without being mediated through social processes, especially the recognition of ethnic interests. The ethnic factor is a fundamental force in the Third World environment and must be incorporated into any development strategy that is adopted. Ethnic pluralism cannot be assumed out of existence; it cannot be reduced to an epi-phenomenon that will disappear when change transforms the environment. The ethnic factor is integral to the environment; it is at once both the subject and object of change. If it is accepted that the ethnic variable is and must be an integral part of the process of planned change, then one would expect to find it occupying a central role in the many strategies of development that have been designed and implemented in the Third World. Yet this is not the case. In the orthodox models of economic and political development from which strategies of change have been adopted for Third World transformation, the ethnic factor has generally been neglected.

The obstacles that have been identified have come to define the nature of the development task. In the economic sphere, they are lack of capital, entrepreneurial and organizational expertise, infrastructure etc.; in the political realm, they are problems of participation, power, mobilization, etc.; and in the social field, they focus on institutional structures, minimum standards of education, nutrition, maternity care, housing, etc. Different ideologies of development vary the salience and mixes of these factors in interpreting and facilitating change.

Regardless of whether they are founded on Marxist class analysis or capitalist laissez faire market claims, the various interpretations of social change tend to consign out of existence or consciousness the political-cultural claims of ethno-national groups, deeming these residual factors which would in due course be assimilated or eliminated in the process of developmental change. The evidence against this de-emphasis of the ethno-cultural factor by the different ideologies is devastating. From Lebanon in the Middle East to Guyana on the South American continent, from Northern Ireland to Azerbaijan in Europe to Quebec in North America, from the Sudan and South Africa to Sri Lanka and Malaysia, the assertion of the ethnic factor has made shambles of development objectives and social peace everywhere, on all continents, in both underdeveloped and industrialized societies. But particularly in the multi-ethnic states of the impoverished Third World, the ethnic resurgence, like an unrestrained monster, has devastated all those promising plans for change, built on sophisticated economic and other models. Where it has exploded, the “ethnic bomb” has diverted enormous amounts of scarce resources for security and stability. From a neglected and peripheral factor, the ethnic variable has now emerged as one of the paramount forces of Third World change.

The environment of cultural pluralism and ethnic diversity is now grudgingly but generally acknowledged as a critical variable that must be incorporated in designing new strategies for development. We know little about this factor, however, and only in a general way, not with the sort of sure-minded confidence that goes with the manner in which an established body of knowledge is handled. The reason for this ambivalence is clear. Systematic knowledge of

ethnicity in the operations of social structure and in particular with reference to development is desperately deficient and scholarship impoverished. The ethnicity domain is a frontier only now being systematically explored. Questions on the nature of this phenomenon are as plentiful as accepted answers are lacking. Many contemporary theorists and researchers are generating new insights into ethnic relations. There is urgent need to examine the relationship between ethnicity and development in all its manifold political, economic, and social dimensions. The task is daunting; on its outcome may rest the fruitfulness of many designs of development involving billions of dollars and the fates of millions of poor people.

This essay aims to offer some empirical evidence and to generate some theoretical insights into the behaviour of the ethnic factor in the developmental experience of one Third World country, Fiji. The effort is undertaken in the belief that observation of individual country experiences can provide important building blocks for the construction of a wider theory on the connection between ethnicity and development. The essay begins with a discourse on and a definition of ethnicity.

Analysts define ethnicity in different ways to suit individual research needs. The sense in which it is used here incorporates three components: first, collective consciousness; secondly, bases of affinity; and thirdly, behavioural effects. Above all, ethnicity refers to collective group consciousness, that is, a shared sense of identity with a larger community; it pertains to the perception that one shares a common identity with a particular group and, in turn, is so perceived by others. Ethnicity is akin to nationalism and for this reason, ethnic consciousness may be referred to as ethno-nationalism so as to point to the fact many states contain several sub-communities with a distinct sense of consciousness from other similar groups. The second component of ethnicity points to certain putative commonalities such as common language, religion, region, tradition, etc., or a multiple coincidence of several of these, which together can contribute to deep divisions in a state. Clifford Geertz referred to these factors as "primordial":

> "By primordial attachment is meant one that stems from the 'givens' or more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed 'givens' of social existence: immediate contiguity and live connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. These congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times, over-powering coerciveness in and of themselves. One is bound to one's kinsman, one's neighbour, one's fellow believer, ipso facto as the result not merely of personal attraction, tactical necessity, common interest or incurred moral obligation but at least in great part by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself."[1]

The primordial factors such as religion, race, language, custom, etc. may be regarded as "objective" features which underlie ethnic identity and facilitate collective consciousness. It is not important that scientific evidence bears out the accuracy of group claims to these commonly apprehended bases of identity. Neither is it significant that the boundaries of these cleavages be always maintained consistently. What is crucial, as Shibutani and Kwan noted, is that an ethnic group consists "of those who conceive of themselves as being alike by virtue of their common ancestry, real or fictitious, and who are so regarded by others."[2] Equally important is that ethnic boundaries are socially constructed and reproduced in relation to these symbolic and instrumental needs of a group. As Barth pointed out, they are almost entirely "subjectively-held categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves".[3] The

[1] Clifford Geertz, "Primordial sentiments and civic politics in the new states: The integrative revolution", in C. Geertz (ed.), **Old Societies and New States**, Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1963, p. 109.

[2] T. Shibutani and K.M. Kwan, **Ethnic Stratification**, New York: MacMillan, 1965, p. 47.

[3] K.Barth (ed.), **Ethnic Groups and Boundaries**, Bergen, Norway: Universitetsforlaget, 1969.

maintenance of the boundaries is situationally determined, may shift over time and context, and generally serves to differentiate members dialectically and oppositionally from other groups in terms of "we-they" antipathies. The third feature of ethnicity refers the behavioural effects of this variant of group membership. Specifically, ethnic group membership, as a politically self-aware entity, confers symbolic solidarity satisfactions as well as instrumental and material advantages. Joseph Rothchild expresses well this aspect of the ethnic phenomenon:

> "The politicization of ethnicity translates the personal quest for meaning and belonging into a group demand for respect and power. To politicise ethnicity is (a) to render people cognitively aware of the relevance of politics to the health of their cultural values and vice-versa; (b) to stimulate their concern about this nexus; (c) to mobilise them into self-conscious ethnic groups; and (d) to direct their behaviour in the political arena on the basis of this awareness."[4]

The important point here is that ethnicity is a politically charged phenomenon whose consciousness is stimulated into existence by certain "triggers" such as group contact, modernization and policy choices by the state which in turn precipitate defensive group quest as well as initiatives for symbolic and material gains. Consequently, ethnic group formation is affirmed dialectically on the anvil of rival counter-claims to the interests of other groups. Ethnic group identity is relational and conflictual. It is often marked, in the pursuit of an objective, by an intensity of emotion that is at once community-building when moderately expressed and self-annihilating when fanatically followed. Ethnic solidarity bears its own internal logic, compelled by its own formative needs, but once it picks up momentum it rarely can be denied. To some it is a marauding monster while to others it embodies the finest creative spirit of a community. It easily ignites into uncontrollable violence out of proportion to the rational goals that impelled it to act in the first place. To Donald Horowitz, baffled by the irrational intensity to which heightened ethnic arousal is prone, "the roots of mass antagonism may reside in the domain of psychology."[5] Critical to this phenomenon from a behavioural perspective is the element of comparison and competition that is found in the irrational behaviour of ethnic groups. Social psychologist Henry Tajfel pointed to the propensity for group loyalty to be sustained intensely and irrationally not for "greater profit in absolute terms" but in order "to achieve relatively higher profit for members of their in-group as compared with members of the out-group."[6]

Ethnic groups are, however, not always negative social entities as their well-reported outbursts suggest. They are more frequently very rational bodies which act as pressure groups in pursuit of the programmatic interests of their members. They may seek limited ends following legal procedures and provide a host of solidarity services for their members. Horowitz summarized these very nicely:

> "Among the most important needs met by ethnicity is the need for familiarity and community, for family-like ties, for emotional support and reciprocal help, and for mediation and dispute resolution - for all the needs served by kinship, but now on a larger map. Common ethnicity can create bonds between bureaucrats and citizens. If impersonal criteria of treatment and impartiality are novel, suspect or imperfectly understood, then protection deriving from the very partiality of ethnicity can provide a cushion against arbitrariness. Ethnicity, moreover, provides a convenient handle for political organization to press claims on government and to interpret government to group members. In short, members of an elite group need not face a new environment, an untested system of relations, or a situation requiring help all alone."[7]

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[4] J. Rothchild, **Ethno-Politics**, New York: Columbia University Press, 1981, p. 6.

[5] D. Horowitz, **Ethnic Groups and Boundaries**, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.

[6] H. Tajfel, "Experiments in inter-group discrimination", **Scientific American**, 223, 1970, pp. 96-102.

[7] Horowitz, 1989, op.cit.

Overall then it can be seen that ethnicity is a hydra-headed phenomenon alive with malleable sociological form, impregnated with mercurial psychological consciousness, laden with economic and political claims and endowed with religio-symbolic fervour.

The importance of Fiji consists of a demonstrated case where multi-ethnicity has engendered sectional consciousness which in turn has rendered efforts at development difficult if not impossible. Few empirical instances exist where the contours of the aroused ethnic phenomenon have been so available for open scrutiny as the Fiji case. The Fiji experience follows closely, in many respects, a paradigmatic model that generally describes a familiar pattern of ethnic conflict from its inception in colonial migration of different peoples leading to the creation of a plural society. Once these diverse peoples are implanted in the state, the emergence and hardening of multiple cleavages in residence, religion, race, and culture may occur. This can be followed by the arousal of collective group consciousness typically through contact, colonial manipulation, and/or modernization. The introduction of democratic practices at some point thereafter may abet unrestrained inter-ethnic rivalries for control of the state. In a context of zero-sum party politics, competition for values and resources, as well as protection of communal identity, can lead to periodic bouts of ethnic riots and violence. Attempts at inter-communal reconciliation might be followed by the rise of ethnic "outbidders" who ignite the latent fires of ethnic fears, which often culminates in the failure of inter-ethnic compromises and accords. Self-serving analyses and justifications of intransigent communal claims and the blaming of the other side for perfidies of various sorts then become abundant. A new level in the rising crescendo of inter-ethnic tensions and the loss of rationality result, fuelled by the alleged violation of sacred communal symbols. In the intensifying ethnic struggle that may follow, one group seizes control of the state (through legal or illegal means) and implements a policy of ethnic repression, discrimination and systematic human rights violations. Mass migration may then follow threats of genocide. The new power wielders may deploy immense amounts of scarce state resources for national security and surveillance of entire ethnic communities. This tends to thwart national efforts at development and may result in the persistence of debilitating divisions and the creation of a garrison state, overseas refugee communities and the internationalization of the conflict. The upshot can be the entrenchment of a pattern of poverty shared by victim and victimizers alike and the collective helplessness of the ethnic state caught in an unending quagmire of misery.

There are many variations to this sequence of ethnically-propelled events from country to country. The Fiji case captures nearly all of these phases and for this reason deserves close analysis to yield insights into the behaviour of ethnic conflict. This study attempts to give a view of the ethnic phenomenon in Fiji. The evolution of the communal struggles and the ensuing conflicts have been observed at close hand every year since 1973 during field research by the author.

I. Fiji: The Making of a Multi-Ethnic Mosaic

Communal relations in Fiji are marked by pervasive malaise. Expressions of mutual contempt by Fijians and Indians are restrained, but periodically spill over into public discourse. Practically no one in Fiji's multi-ethnic social setting is free from the corrosive ravages of ethnic stereotyping that attends cross-cultural interaction. Paradoxically, no one disagrees that the tense atmosphere is harmful to inter-community co-operation. But the same person who openly condemns the prejudices displayed in routine inter-communal exchanges proceeds in the privacy of his or her own home and community to perpetuate them. Hypocritical professions of concern for one's cross-communal compatriot are as endemic in the system as racism itself. It is a deadly game of serious self-deception. More than once in recent years, collective ethnic violence has threatened to spill over into the public arena and envelope the entire fragile system in conflagration. The fear that one day all restraints would be removed in

a confrontation had haunted communal leaders in spite of their weak attempts to forge a formula for peaceful co-existence.

Politics in Fiji has a built-in potential for recurrent instability, stimulated in part by its ethnically plural socio-cultural structure (see table 1).[8]

Table 1		
Population of Fiji: 1987		
Fijian	322,920	46%
Indian	336,960	48%
European	7,020	1%
Part-European	14,040	2%
Chinese,Part-Chinese	7,020	1%
Other Pacific Islanders	14,040	2%
Total	545,205	100%

Source: **Country Survey: Pacific Island Economies**, Vol. II, Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1991:20.

Two groups, indigenous Fijians and Indians, constitute over 94 per cent of the total population. They live side by side, but each is hostile to the other. They do not share basic cultural institutions. Their economic resources are different but complementary, rendering economic exchange necessary. Until independence in October 1970, the two cultural sections were kept together in outward harmony by the colonial government which served as "umpire". Since independence, they have engaged in deeply divisive disputes over the issue of ethnic domination. In these respects, Fiji conforms uncannily to the plural society model postulated by J.S. Furnivall.[9]

Fundamentally integrated[10] plural societies lack an underlying consensus of basic values and are perennially exposed to strife stimulated by ethno-nationalism. Political moderation is a scarce commodity; even where it exists by compromise and special arrangements worked out by inter-communal elites, social equilibrium can be disrupted easily by ambitious politicians who manipulate stereotypical inter-ethnic fears. Called "outbidders" in the jargon of plural society analysts, they disrupt the fragile political order charging that the moderate leaders have sold out to the other side or that they have designed conspiracy arrangements which serve their personal interests at the expense of their unsuspecting followers.[11]

Events a decade before the first military intervention in 1987 illustrate the fearsome power of outbidders. On 9 October 1975, Sakiasi Butadroka, a member of the House of Representatives, introduced a motion calling for the expulsion from Fiji of all persons of Indian origin, that is, about half of the country's total population. Ethnic Fijian sympathy for the motion was widespread. Indians felt insecure in Fiji notwithstanding constitutional guarantees giving them full citizenship. The prejudices of Fijians and Indians were and remain two sides of the same coin: each is frustrated by the other's presence. In this section, I discuss inter-ethnic relations in Fiji with a focus on Fijian-Indian relations since the other elements in Fiji's ethnic mosaic are relatively small. In issue areas where they feature as salient forces, they will be discussed in appropriate detail. In the following presentation, "Fijian" refers to indigenous persons who have descended from the original inhabitants of Fiji; "Indians" refers to descendants of persons who came to Fiji from India.

[8] Commonwealth Secretariat, **Notes on the Commonwealth**, London: Commonwealth Secretariat,1987.

[9] J.S. Furnival, **Colonial Policy and Practice**, Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1948, pp.304-312.

[10] M.G. Smith, "Institutional and political conditions of pluralism" in L. Kuper and M.G. Smith (eds.), **Pluralism in Africa**, Berkeley: University of California Press], 1965, pp.26-63.

[11] A. Rabushka and K.A. Shepslie, **Politics in Plural Societies**, Colombus, Ohio: Charles Merrill Co.,1972, p.82.

The Making of a Plural Society in Fiji: The Ethnic Groups

Fiji is an archipelago of some 844 islands lying at the centre of the South Pacific. Fiji was colonized on 10 October 1874 under a Deed of Cession that bound Britain to preserve the Fijian way of life. Three policies, initiated to halt the steady decline of Fijian customs, laid the cornerstone of communalism. First, all land which was not yet alienated to Europeans - nearly 90 per cent of the country - was to remain under Fijian ownership. Because growth depended on the availability of Fijian land for commercial exploitation, however, this policy had the effect of curtailing the economic development of the islands. Land, then, became an issue. The second policy was the use of migrant or "imported" labour as a substitute for Fijian workers. Many of these workers were recruited from India: between 1879 when labour indentureship was inaugurated and 1916 when it was terminated, about 60,537 Indians had been introduced into Fiji.[12] About one-half of them returned to India, and the rest remained in Fiji under a scheme that allowed them to become legal residents "with privileges no whit inferior to those of any other class of Her Majesty's subjects resident in the colonies".[13] The Indian population grew steadily so that by 1945 there were more Indians than Fijians in the country.

The third policy was the establishment of a separate Native Fijian Administration, through which the British governed the Fijians indirectly. The Fijian hierarchical political structure was recognized and Fijian chiefs continued to govern their own people. This policy substantially preserved the traditional Fijian culture by virtually establishing a state within a state. It protected the Fijians to such an extent that many were almost wholly unprepared to compete with the Europeans and Indians once their circle of interaction had enlarged beyond the village. The upshot was the institutionalization of Fijian economic inferiority. By the mid-1980s, some 40 per cent of all Fijians still subsisted mainly from villages, and those who no longer relied on their villages for their incomes were employed mainly by the government. Fijians regarded the government bureaucracy as their domain. Fijian penetration of the business sector has been generally unsuccessful.[14]

Most Indian immigrants to Fiji came as indentured labourers. By the end of the Second World War, some 80 per cent of cane farmers were Indians. However, most of the farmed lands were leased from Fijians.[15] About 3-6 per cent of the total Indian population, mainly Gujaratis, came as free settlers. They established businesses and were later joined by other Indians who left the sugar fields to start small stores and trade shops. In contemporary Fiji, most small and intermediate size commercial operations are in Indian hands. In the professions - law, medicine, engineering, etc. - Indian incursion into traditional European areas has also become significant. Many Indians and Fijians have moved to urban areas such as Suva and Lautoka. As in the rural areas where Indians and Fijians live apart (Fijians live in small concentrated nucleated villages while Indian farming units are dispersed on sprawling leased matagali land), in the towns such as Suva similar ethnic residential self-selectivity occurs, rendering city wards predominantly Fijian or Indian.[16] Census reports reveal that in four-fifths of the enumerated areas on the two main islands, 70 per cent are either predominantly Indian or Fijian.

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[12] A. Ali,"The Indians of Fiji", **Economic and Political Weekly**, VIII(36), 8 September 1973, p.1655.

[13] The words in inverted commas are referred to as the "Salisbury Dispatch" and are often invoked by Indians to assert claims to equal rights in Fiji.

[14] R.F. Watters, **Koro: Economic Development and Social Change in Fiji**, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969, pp.1-48.

[15] To this day, sugar remains the most significant crop in the economy, providing more than half of Fiji's foreign reserves. E.K. Fisk, **The Political Economy of Independent Fiji**, Canberra: Australian National University Press,1970, pp. 16-17.

[16] A.C. Walsh, "Fiji's changing population: Implications for race relations", **Unispac**, 8(1), pp. 1-2.

Cultural features also separate the two major communities. While English is the cross-communal language, Indians speak Hindustani among themselves and Fijians their indigenous language. The radio stations carry separate programmes in Hindustani and Fijian, and until recently, educational institutions were segregated. Finally, most voluntary social and economic organizations such as sports clubs and trade unions are predominantly uni-ethnic. Inter-marriage between Fijians and Indians is practically non-existent.

Europeans, although numerically insignificant, have dominated the direction of the colony. The lingua franca is English. Consequently, Europeans are over-represented as managers, supervisors, professional and skilled workers generally. Many big businesses remain in the hands of Europeans and European-owned companies.[17]

The remaining population categories are the Chinese, mixed races and other Pacific islanders. The Chinese are mainly small business owners and skilled professional workers. The other Pacific islanders refer mainly the Rotumans who belong to the adjacent island, Rotuma, which is part of Fiji's territory, and to Solomon Islanders and those from other nearby islands who were originally recruited to serve on European plantations.

Ethnic conflict is often fired by stereotypes shared by communal groups in a plural society. Fijians generally regard Indians as frugal, profit-oriented, and aggressive. Substantially, this image is derived from Indian commercial activities, even though only a small minority of Indians own or manage businesses. Overall, the behaviour ascribed to Indians has led to Fijian fears that they will eventually be overrun by an "alien" group in their own native country. Many Fijians believe that Indians are contemptuous of Fijian culture and that alleged Indian disrespect owes its roots to cultural arrogance and even feelings of racial superiority. The Indian stereotype of the Fijian is that of a person who is lazy, unambitious, and inferior. Indian achievements in cash cropping (sugar), commerce and the professions stand in stark contrast to similar Fijian achievements.

Despite the fact that stereotypical categories paint Fiji's communities into almost rigid ethnic compartments, objective evidence points to important internal divisions within each communal segment as well as cross-sectional overlaps that have significant bearing on ethnic relations. In Fiji, cleavages between the two dominant groups have been erected around six major criteria: race, language, religion, culture, occupation, and residence. Race, language, religion and culture are primordial differentiators between the two groups while occupation and residential patterns are secondarily-acquired traits. Racial and phenotypic differences serve as the first signals in identifying relationships of ethnic affinity; it is easy at first sight to tell an Indian from a Fijian. Colour is not necessarily part of the physical differentiators, however, as many Fijians and Indians share the same pigmentation. Religion is a major divider with practically all Fijians adhering to Christianity while Indians overwhelmingly adhere to Hinduism or Islam. Language is also a pervasive separator, for when in their own company, Fijians and Indians speak their own tongue. Cultural practices such as rituals and observances around religion, diet, marriage and family matters separate the groups literally into two different worlds. Hence, racial, linguistic, religious and cultural cleavages fall one on top of the other in a pattern of coinciding reinforcements separating Indians from Fijians.

To be sure, there are areas of sharing such as education and attire. However, culture in Fiji encapsulates in a meaningful sense the essential differences between the two groups. After over a century of sharing the same country and colonial master, cultural convergence has been minimal. The secondary cleavages - occupation and residential patterns - are acquisitions from colonial adaptation. Most Indians are rural dwellers who cultivate sugar cane and live in individual homesteads. Most Fijians are also rural residents but they live in widely separated

[17] See A. Rokotunivuna et al., **Fiji: A Developing Australian Colony**, Melbourne: International Development Action, 1974.

nucleated villages and plant food crops primarily. In towns where Fijians and Indians meet, they live in predominantly Indian or Fijian residential neighbourhoods and hold jobs in occupations predominantly staffed by Fijian or Indian personnel. But even here, the occupational and residential structures are not cast in exclusive compartments. Especially in the civil service, Indians and Fijians work side by side. This happens less so in stores and factories. Urbanization and migration patterns point to increasing Indian-Fijian interaction and residential mixing, but not much of this penetrates the separated cultural systems. Important instances of cross-cutting experiences exist. Specifically, English is the language of communication between the two groups. In the cultural sphere, all Fiji citizens share common educational facilities and teachers in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions.[18] Trade unions are still preponderantly uni-ethnic in Fiji, including the two unions representing Fiji teachers. Associations remain primarily but not exclusively subscribed by one ethnic group.

While major cleavages divide ethnic groups into cultural compartments, each segment in turn is not monolithically unified. Internal divisions within the Fijian and Indian communities have assumed salience in the last decade. Within the Indian group, there are Muslims and Hindus with the former constituting about 15 per cent of the Indian population. A further division exists between North and South Indians as well as separate sub-identities such as Punjabis, Gujaratis, etc. Traditional Hindu-Muslim antipathy has had political reverberations in Fiji's Indian politics. Many Muslims have joined the Fijian Alliance or were closet sympathizers. Many Gujarati businessmen have also been covert supporters of the Alliance.

Within the Fijian section of the population, internal regional and linguistic divisions compounded by coinciding economic disparities have split Fijian political solidarity. In part, these divisions influenced the formation of the Fijian Nationalist Party and the Western United Front. The Indians in the Alliance and Fijians in the Federation Party, however, were a very slender and shifting minority and did not constitute a powerful enough force to modify Fiji's deeply bifurcated society.

II. The Problem of Balance

In subsequent sections, a number of issue areas will be examined in detail to see how the contest for resources and policy favours has been conducted among the ethnic elements in Fiji. We shall see how ethnic identity originated in the colonial order and came to influence the claims to niches of power and privilege, and how, in a circular dynamic of reinforcement, the struggle stimulated intensified competition and ethnic antagonism, justifying further assertions for a system of distribution sensitive to ethnic fears. Specifically, we look at the perennial problems of political representation, land, and the allocation of employment opportunities in the private and public sectors. To understand how ethnic claims to privileges and power are legitimated, it is crucial to look at the concept of balance. Until the military intervention in 1987, balance prevailed (however imperfectly).

Not a written constitutional law, the idea of balance was embedded in Fiji's multi-racial politics by practice. Sectoral pre-eminence was distributed as follows: Fijians controlled the government, in particular, the Prime Minister's office; they also owned 83 per cent of all the land. Indians dominated the sugar industry and intermediate-size business; and Europeans owned the very large businesses, such as banks, hotels, factories, etc. This distributive sectoral "balance" was not a rigid formula for the sharing of power in all its detail. Room existed for one ethnic group to penetrate and participate in another group's domain. For instance, the Alliance Government (1970-1987) used subsidies to encourage the entry of Fijians into businesses, while the Prime Minister, a Fijian, deliberately appointed several Indians to his Cabinet. Fijians leased their land to Indians and others. This limited "mix" moderated the sharp edges and virtual monopoly rights of the balancing concept. At various

[18] A. Mamak, **Color, Culture, and Conflict: Pluralism in Fiji**, New York: Pergamon Press, 1978, p.165.

times in Fiji's recent history, balance has been in danger of being upset, leading to efforts to rectify the disequilibrium. For example, when Indian population growth threatened to overwhelm the demographic balance, the government informally initiated two policies to offset it: a vigorous birth control and family planning programme more oriented to the Indian than the Fijian population, and a policy enabling Indians to emigrate from Fiji taking their assets with them.

Balance assumed asymmetrical areas of dominance and sustained equality by requiring reciprocity. Such exchanges were, however, not motivated by sympathy for another community but were informed by self-interest. Each group needed the resources of the others to survive and maintain its standard of living. Each group was its brother's keeper in a mundane, practical, self-interested sense. It was no more in the interest of the Fijians to deny Indians access to land than for Indians not to pay taxes to the Fijian-dominated government. Balance evolved through the constant nurturing of inter-communal consultation and co-operation. It was not a rigid or written agreement but a dynamic concept that required revisions and adaptations reflecting changes in society. However, balance could only be a short-term solution for inter-communal conflict: its survival depended on amicable relations among elites. The balancing act was bound to face assault sooner or later by chauvinistic outbidders who, at a moment of opportunity, wanted to instigate nationalist adherents not to accept part of the pie but to seize all of it. Balance, in such a situation, would be displaced by "hegemony" and all the consequences this entailed, or it could trigger civil strife that destroyed the society. In the face of rapid social change, balance was not easily applied to new areas of activities. Cross-communal coalitions could emerge to challenge the balancing concept or technological breakthroughs could bestow overwhelming benefits to one ethnic group leaving others behind. In the following sections of the paper, we shall see how the balancing concept evolved and note the difficulties it confronted in the absence of an explicit formula for its application. In relating the concept to representation, land and employment, Indians and Fijians enunciated their own ideas of balance to assert dominance and to prevent encroachment on their claimed territory. In effect, balance was repeatedly evoked to justify an ethnic claim; its meaning, however, was so manipulated that it served to legitimate self-interest.

III. Triggering Issues: Representation, Land and Jobs

In the making of Fiji's multi-ethnic mosaic, several perennial problems aggravated relations between Fijians and Indians. In particular, communal conflict evolved around the issue of representation, as the British colonial authorities introduced popular participation in collective decision-making; insecurity of ownership and leasing of land; and the distribution of public service jobs and budgetary allocations for development projects. In this section, these issues are examined, showing why they evolved into the incendiary materials which ignited communal conflict between Fijians and Indians. We shall also show how this was resolved in the independence constitution of 1970. Underlying the issues was a fierce but subdued contest between Fijians and Indians for the protection of their communal interests. Frequently, this struggle assumed the form of a threat of ethnic domination. Fijians propounded a doctrine of paramountcy to safeguard their interests. Indians sought a system of equality under which they could obtain fair access to the values of the society. The struggle was often cast in zero-sum terms so that the ethnic strife that was triggered seemed intractable. At various times, an informal balancing accord in the distribution of communal claims was struck. At other times, inter-communal understandings were challenged and ethnic conflict loomed large and imminent.

Representation: Fear of Indian Domination and the Demand for Fijian Political Paramountcy

To understand this issue, it is necessary return to 1874 when Fiji was annexed by Britain. Fijians read into the Deed of Cession a claim of "paramountcy". The word itself is not

mentioned in the Deed, but repeatedly invoked, "paramountcy" evolved into a mystical doctrine of Fijian supremacy.[19] In the twentieth century, it was asserted as a counter-claim to the perceived threat of Indian domination. It has since retained this ethnicized connotation.

When popular representation was first introduced in Fiji in 1904, the colonial council included 2 nominated Fijians representing an indigenous population of 92,000 and 6 elected Europeans representing 2,440 persons. The Indian population of 22,000 was left completely without representation.[20] One scholar noted that "in the compartmentalized world of colonialism, social intercourse between ethnic groups was discouraged."[21] Indians demanded equal representation; the settlers reacted arguing that superior European representation was justified on the basis of "their large stake in developing the economy of the islands".[22] With the intensification of Indian agitation for equal representation, Indian-European intersectional animosity was inaugurated.[23] Indian demand for electoral equality was couched in terms of "common" roll (one man, one vote) as distinct from the "communal" roll (sectional representation). Because the Fijians were governed under a separate native administration, the Indian demand for a common roll challenged European control of the colonial council and was interpreted as an attempt to introduce Indian political domination of Fiji. When the Indian population surpassed that of the Fijian in 1946 and Indians became a clear majority of the entire population by 1966, the fear of alleged Indian hegemony became more vocal.

To the Fijians, the threat of Indian domination contravened the Deed of Cession which in their view accorded them paramountcy in their own land above all other sectional interests. Fijians shared the European view that common roll would cause a fundamental alteration in favour of Indians in the distribution of political power and privileges in Fiji. Indians viewed the alternative to "common roll", communal representation, as the institutionalization of their inequality and political inferiority. In the colonial council, Fijians joined the European members in strongly attacking the Indian demand for a common roll. Over the following years, common roll "in the minds of European and Fijian members [had] become synonymous with an attempt at political domination by Indians."[24]

In the 1960s when universal suffrage was introduced, a full-blown party system came into existence consisting of two major parties. The National Federation party (NFP) was supported predominantly by Indians and the Alliance Party mainly by Fijians, but also by Europeans, Chinese and others. What did not change under the new political order was the communal system of representation which over-represented Europeans. The struggle to correct these inequities and the debate over the relative merits of the common versus the communal system of representation was, after 1966, carried on mainly by the two political parties representing communal interests. Essentially, as self-government approached, the contest for power shifted to a bipolar, Indian-versus-Fijian, confrontation. How the new emergent local leaders reconciled Indian claims for common roll against the "paramount" rights of the Fijians had to be ironed out through the political process of bargaining and compromise.

Although the Fijians initially resisted independence, fearing Indian designs to dominate Fiji, they gradually came to accept it as inevitable. The result of the 1966 elections in particular heartened the Fijians since it gave the Fijian-dominated Alliance Party an overwhelming victory against the predominantly Indian National Federation Party.[25] Between August 1969

[19] S. Hagen, "Race, politics and the coup in Fiji", **Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars**, 19(4),October-December, pp. 2-18.

[20] A. Ali, "The arrival of the communal franchise", **Journal of Pacific Studies**, October 1980.

[21] A. Ali, **From Plantation to Politics**, Suva: Fiji Times Publications, 1980, p. 178.

[22] N. Meller and J. Anthony, **Fiji Goes to the Polls**, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1967, pp. 11-12.

[23] K.C. Gillion, **Fiji's Indian Migrants**, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1962.

[24] Meller and Anthony, 1967, op.cit., p. 15.

[25] R.K. Vasil, "Communalism and constitution-making in Fiji", **Pacific Affairs**, 45(23), Spring 1972.

and March 1970, the representatives of the NFP and Alliance met to work out a constitutional solution for Fiji. On the system of representation, the Alliance accepted the common roll as a long-term objective and acceded to the NFP demands that (1) a royal commission be established sometime between the first and second elections after independence to re-examine the entire issue of common versus communal roll, and (2) common roll elections be held for the municipalities of Suva and Lautoka. In the meantime, a system of communal and cross-communal voting continued. The lower House in the proposed bicameral Parliament was composed thus:[26]

Table 2			
Lower House of Parliament: Ethnic Composition			
Group as % of population	Communal roll	National roll	Total
Fijian Indians (5.8%)	12	10	22 (42.3%)
Fijians, Pacific Islanders (45.7%)	12	10	22 (42.3%)
Europeans, Chinese, Mixed Races (15.4%)	3	5	8 (15.4%)
Total	27	25	52 (100%)

Parity of representation was accorded the Fijians and Indian communities, while the European, part-European and Chinese sectors referred to as "general electors", although constituting only 3.5 per cent of the population, continued to be over-represented with 15.4 per cent of the seats. On paramount rights for Fijians, the NFP conceded that additional "weight" should be allocated to Fijian interests. The device through which this was to be implemented was a second chamber, a Senate. The power of the Senate resided not only in the representation of superior numbers of Fijians, but in the amendment procedure. This it did by requiring a two-thirds majority in each chamber for altering the constitution. Here, it must be noted that the Fijian Great Council of Chiefs had 8 out of 22 seats, that is, more than one third of the total seats, and was thus capable of blocking any constitutional change.[27]

Indian negotiators successfully won acceptance of full Indian citizenship. To underscore that this citizenship implied equality and freedom from discrimination, a Bill of Rights was agreed upon to prohibit discrimination on "grounds of race, place of origin, political opinions, colour or creed." In exchange , it was agreed that after independence Fiji would retain dominion status within the Commonwealth and that there be a definite reference to the Deed of Cession in the constitution so that "if there was a threat to their position through constitutional changes, [Fijians] would invoke the Deed."

The Safeguarding of Fijian Land

The land issue is perhaps the most significant point of Fijian-Indian conflict. Fijians own most of the country's land under a system of traditional communal tenure that prohibits private individual alienation to non-Fijians. In a modern cash economy dominated by Europeans and Indians, land constitutes the Fijians' most powerful instrument of political bargaining. Being mainly farmers, Indians view land as indispensable to their survival. Since they own very little of it, and alternative avenues of employment are limited, however, they require predictable access to land use. The struggle, then, between Fijian owners and Indian lessees is cast in terms of vital needs over a very limited resource generating unusual emotional intensity around the issue.

[26] P. Grocott, "Fiji: Politics of communalism" in **Readings of Pacific Politics**, Waigani: University of Papua New Guinea Printery, 1976, p. 76.

[27] R. Norton, **Race and Politics in Fiji**, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1978.

The freezing of the tenure pattern has bequeathed a legacy of wide disparities in land ownership.[28] Fijians, constituting about 47 per cent of the population, retain ownership over 83.8 per cent of total land; less than 10 per cent of this is cultivable. Europeans, about 1 per cent of the population, own in freehold 5.5 per cent of prime commercial land. Indians, forming about 48 per cent of the population, own 1.7 per cent. The overwhelming majority of Indians are tenants and sub-tenants who depend on Fijians for leased land. About 62 per cent of the leases issued by Fijians are held by Indians. Indians utilize the land mainly for sugar farming; about 80 per cent of the sugar farmers are Indians who continue to demand more land. This has launched Fijians and Indians on a collision course that continues to this day. Fijians' fears of losing their land, as well as their desire to retain land unencumbered by long leases for future use, led to the enactment of the controversial land reserves policy in 1940. Called the Native Land Trust Ordinance, the legislation established the Native Land Trust Board (NLTB) to administer the leasing of Fijian land and to terminate leases where necessary so as to create "reserves" for future Fijian use. With such insecure tenure, Indian farmers had little incentive to develop a true attachment to the land. Further, as more land was placed in reserve, the country lost revenues from taxes, fewer people were employed, and more persons moved into already overcrowded urban areas in search of jobs. Fijians defended the land reserves policy pointing out that the availability of land provided the incentive for them to cultivate the soil commercially. Because of long leases, they argued, many Fijians did not have the opportunity to use their land in their lifetime. Furthermore, they claimed that the overwhelming majority of leases were renewed so that the commotion and criticisms over non-renewal were exaggerated and unfair.

Caught between the needs of Indians for long-term secure leases and Fijian demands for more reserves, the British colonial administrators oversaw the passage of the Agricultural Landlord and Tenants Ordinance (ALTO) in 1966, which required the NLTB to offer tenants an initial lease for 10 years plus two subsequent 10-year periods if the land was not needed by Fijians. The legislation was a balancing compromise that temporarily stabilized Indian-Fijian relations over land. Fijian interests in land were safeguarded in the 1970 independence constitution which validated Fijian claims to 83 per cent of the country's land and entrenched Fijian land rights by requiring two-thirds of the Great Council of Chiefs in the Senate to alter the land-related aspects of the constitution. Indian access to land was further strengthened in 1976 by an amendment to ALTO giving leases for an initial period of 20 years instead of 10 years. The deterioration of Fijian-Indian relations following the military intervention in 1987 throws the renewal of these leases in the mid-1990's into uncertainty.

Competition for Jobs in the Public Sector

Employment, especially in the public sector, emerged as an arena in which competitive claims for ethnic shares attained a special intensity. While the two issues of representation and land were bound by colonial precedent and yielded to formal compromises, jobs in the modern commercial sector and public bureaucracy - both spheres expanding significantly in the period following the Second World War - were left widely open for competition by the ethnic communities. The civil service, the professions and private business represented the modern monetary sectors in Fiji. The quest for these positions by Fijians and Indians conferred status not only on individuals but also on their respective communities. The public service, including the education service, became the largest single source of employment in Fiji.

Until independence, the highest posts were occupied by European personnel. To gain access, the non-white population needed European education and training. Under the Education Ordinances of 1916, schools were ethnically segregated with European schools better equipped and staffed. Because of their lack of land and insecure leases, Indians compensated

[28] O.K.H. Spate, **The Fijian People**, Fiji Legislative Council Paper 13, Suva, 1959.

by spending heavily on upgrading their schools. Indian expenditures in education were reflected after the Second World War in the steady displacement of many Europeans in positions that required skills. Fijians' educational achievement was retarded by comparison, in part because of their rural isolation and shortages of teachers.[29] By Independence in 1970, large numbers of Indians and Fijians were attending elementary and secondary schools, but Indians predominated. Fijian students suffered a greater rate of attrition also as they moved to high grades in school. It was almost inevitable, then, given the trend in Indian education, that most university positions went to Indians.

As the public bureaucracy expanded in a scheme where merit determined appointments, Indians pressed for positions. But the concept of balance entered into the picture. After independence, the Fijian-dominated government decided to offset Indian preponderance in the private business sector by higher Fijian employment in the public bureaucracy.[30] Fijians barely outnumbered Indians in the civil service and police force. In the armed forces, however, Fijian over-representation was glaring (see table 3).

Table 3

Fijian armed forces

	Fijian	Indian	Others	Total
Regular force	372	5	19	396
Territorial force	502	29	32	563
Naval squadron	59	2	10	71
Total	933	36	61	1,030

Source: R.K Vasil, "Communalism and Constitution-Making in Fiji", **Pacific Affairs** 45(23), 1972:185.

In the Ministry of Fijian Affairs and Rural Development, during 1975 there were 51 Fijian, 4 Indians, and 1 other; and in the Ministry of Fijian Affairs, there were 35 Fijians only. In the 1980's, Fijian preponderance in the public service had become very lopsided especially at the senior levels. This compelled the Indian opposition leader to accuse the government of:

> "...implementing a policy designed to ensure that all strategic levels of government are staffed by Fijians...placed in positions of command in order to deliberately create an alienated out-group, namely, the Indians. There is little multi-racialism at work. This is reflected in all aspects of governmental work and activities, from its composition, its development strategies, appointments to boards, promotions in the Civil Service, its Crown lands policy, everywhere".[31]

For Fijians, however, public service employment was the primary access route to middle class well-being and status. Their excessive numbers were balanced by Indian preponderance in the private sector. Fijians contributed only about two per cent of the entrepreneurs in the country. Fijian under-representation in business was being remedied by a government policy of affirmative action in its Business Organization and Management Unit (BOMAS) which trained Fijians in business practices and also through extending interest-free loans from the government's Development Bank. The Alliance government acted in other major areas to aid Fijians. Foreign aid for capital projects was directed mostly to Fijian regions or to activities benefiting mainly Fijians, including the pine wood industry and its predominantly Fijian-staffed Pine Commission, the tuna fisheries project, and the sugar cane Seaquaqua scheme in Vanua Levu.

[29] B. Lal (ed.), **Politics in Fiji**, Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1986.

[30] R.S. Milne, **Politics in Ethnically Bi-Polar States**, Vancouver: University of British Colombia Press, 1982, p. 182.

[31] Cited in Ralph R. Premdas, "Towards a government of national unity', **Pacific Perspective**, 10(2), 1980, p. 10.

IV. Ethnic Conflict Resolution: Constitutional and Comity Understandings

The issues which bedevilled relations between Fijians and Indians were resolved in the constitution of 1970. Along with the written compromises, the 1970 constitution had two far-reaching extra-constitutional implications: first, the society-wide power and resources distribution formula encapsulated in the word balance; and second, comity agreements. Without these informal understandings, the written agreements in the constitution could not be implemented.

In an earlier section, the concept of balance was introduced as an informal mechanism for ethnic conflict regulation and resolution. Essentially, the idea of balance embodied an asymmetrical system of sectoral sharing. In summary, the exchanges between Fijians and Indians occurred in the spheres of representation, citizenship, and land. It bears repeating that as a conflict resolution mechanism, balance was an informal, unwritten understanding. It implied exchanges and territorial demarcations. It was fundamentally an unstable formula that depended on comity to which we now turn briefly.

While constitutional agreements provided the broad structural bases for co-operation in Fiji, some other factor was necessary to link the leadership of the two parties so that they could consult each other and collaborate informally in running the government. We use the term "comity agreements" to refer to the varieties of informal devices by which communal leaders worked out a modus vivendi to accommodate each section's interests. The term "consociational democracy" was used by Arend Lijphart to refer to the condition under which elites in a plural society collaborate to manage a democratic polity.[32] In Fiji, Mr Koya and Ratu Mara, leaders of the National Federation Party (NFP) and the Alliance Party respectively, had worked out comity agreements by which they consulted each other privately about running the government. At least two reasons for this arrangement need to be singled out here. First was the realization based on experience that communal conflict was intolerable. In 1968, Fijians and Indians were on the brink of inter-communal war over the results of a by-election.[33] The hovering omnipresence of civil war provided the constant reminder that the price of inter-elite conflict could be the destruction of the society itself.

The second factor concerns "personality". When Koya ascended to the NFP leadership, almost immediately the stalemate over such issues as independence and common roll was broken. For over five years, Mara and Koya consulted each other and co-operated in running Fiji, bringing a remarkable amount of basic peace to the plural society. Above all, inter-communal elite harmony precluded any thought of military intervention. As pointed out earlier, however, a comity arrangement faces danger from outbidders' criticisms alleging conspiracy between elites. Towards the end of 1975 and in early 1976, it appeared that the criticisms by outbidders had started to have their desired effects as it was becoming increasingly difficult to control the centrifugal forces that threatened to split the plural society asunder.

V. The Erosion of Balance

The 1970 constitution embodied a set of delicate compromises by the main communal interests in Fiji's multi-ethnic society. However, the honeymoon that followed did not last long. Soon a basic challenge to the entire constitutional process emerged and while it would be deftly if temporarily suppressed, it laid the foundation for a more powerful movement for revision, indeed, rejection of the entire inter-ethnic accord written in the constitution. This came from the newly-organized Fijian Nationalist Party led by Sakiasi Butadroka who took

[32] A. Lijphart, **Democracy in Plural Societies**, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

[33] R.S. Milne, "The Pacific way: Consociational politics in Fiji", **Pacific Affairs**, September 1975, pp. 413-430.

aim at all of the major concessions constitutionally given to the Indian section, even challenging the continued presence of Indians in Fiji. But equally significant, it caused the Alliance's moderate multi-cultural posture to change. The Butadroka challenge was followed by three critical events in the remaining part of the decade which saw the growth of new strains between the Alliance and Federation parties and threw the entire set of understandings of the 1970 constitution into turmoil.

The first event resulted in part from the outbidding process with which Butadroka's Nationalists had confronted the Alliance Party. In similar manner, a faction within the Indian community decided to challenge Koya's leadership of the Federation Party charging that he had sold out Indian interest at the 1970 constitutional talks. Hence, both Mara and Koya, moderate leaders of their own respective ethnic communities, were confronted by extremist outbidders whose actions pushed the moderate leaders themselves to adopt extreme positions in order to counter the challenge. When this happened, there was bound to be a resurgence of inter-communal malaise which deteriorated into outright Fijian-Indian animosity. The second event occurred as a consequence of the March-April 1977 general elections in which the Alliance lost to the Federation Party. Had the Indian-based Federation Party assumed power, it would have broken the expectations of continued Fijian political paramountcy. In all probability, this in time would have triggered military intervention almost a decade before it actually happened under similar circumstances in 1987. The final event pertained to the Royal Commission Report of 1975 in which the electoral system was reviewed. It was unceremonially and unilaterally rejected by the Alliance government thereby foreclosing Indian demands for an electoral system based on "one man, one vote". These events are examined in more detail below.

Butadroka and the Fijian Nationalist Party

On 9 October 1975, Butadroka introduced a motion in Parliament calling for the expulsion of Fiji's Indians from the country.[34] Fijian sympathy with the motion was widespread. He argued that the Fijian leaders (Koya and the Federation Party) did not consult the people and had "sold out" their interests in exchange for consolidating the interests of the ruling class.

The motto "Fiji is for Fijians" became the platform of Butadroka's new party. However, the success of an outbidder derives in part from the existence of legitimate complaints. Disparities in living standards between the races in Fiji constituted the objective basis of Fijian discontent. The rural Fijian with a highly urban-stimulated expectation level lacked the economic means to satisfy at least some of those desires. By contrast the typical Indian family, more disciplined by insecurity, had more cash to save and spend. Over the years, these difference in work habits accumulated so that one communal section appeared materially better off than the other. Further events between 1972 and 1975 in Fiji had exacerbated the economic disadvantages of Fijians. Triggered by a world-wide recession and later re-enforced by the fuel crises, Fiji succumbed to a pattern of recession, inflation, unprecedented unemployment, industrial disputes, and falling revenues from decreased tourism. By the end of 1972, inflation was running at a two-figure rate, and the annual increase in cost of living had reached 14.4 per cent by 1974. In 1976, the Fijian economy began to recover, but not discernibly fast enough to give hope to the Fijian masses about their economic betterment.

These objective bases of Fijian alienation did not by themselves provide sufficient foundation for a protest or a revolutionary moment. Leadership was vital. This crucial ingredient was provided by Butadroka's own persuasiveness. He argued that the independence constitution was designed to serve foreign interests. Butadroka and his FNP ideologists attempted to provide a theoretical justification to effectively underpin the idea of Fijian paramountcy. Specifically, they attacked the concepts of "democracy" and "equality" as Western values

[34] Ralph R. Premdas, "Constitutional challenge: Nationalist politics in Fiji", **Pacific Perspective**, 9(2),1980.

which had been "the major obstacle in the true independence of Fiji. Citizen rights, equality and the inclusion of the Bill of Human rights were the cause of the draw-backs. The Bill of Human Rights...is an exposition by the Western powers."[35] They saw inconsistency between the promise of paramountcy on one hand, and equality and democracy in the constitution on the other. Underlying the condemnation of the principles of equality and democracy was the interpretation of the Deed of Cession to mean Fijian dominance in all areas of life. On the issue regarding citizenship and equality, the FNP condemned the 1970 constitution for extending a Bill of Rights and citizenship to Indians and Europeans.

The March-April 1977 General Elections

Between 1966 when general elections were introduced and 1972, the Alliance had scored three convincing victories leading observers to predict that the Alliance would win all foreseeable elections in Fiji, including the March-April 1977 general elections. But this felicitous anticipation was predicated on the prevailing structure of the two-party system. No one expected a splinter party to emerge, especially with its base in the Fijian section, to challenge the Alliance. But exactly this occurred in the March-April election when the Fijian Nationalist Party competed for the votes of Fijians. While the Nationalists won only one seat, they drew substantial numbers of Fijians away from the Alliance, reducing its total share of votes from 83 per cent obtained in the 1972 elections to 67 per cent. This allowed the National Federation Party to score victories in at least six of the nine seats that the Alliance lost in 1977.[36] Additionally, Indians voted so overwhelming for the Federation Party that their 25 per cent support for the Alliance in 1972 fell to 16 per cent in 1977.

The Federation Party won the elections with 26 seats. The Nationalists were happy because it was their purpose in participating in the elections to demonstrate that Fijian paramountcy was an Alliance-created illusion. By facilitating the Federation Party's victory, it demonstrated to Fijians that the independence constitution of 1970 did not guarantee that a Fijian will always be Prime Minister and that the Indians were likely sooner or later to take political control of the country (thereby endangering Fijian rights). Fortunately for the Alliance, the Federation Party won only half of the total number of seats in Parliament. The Fijian governor-general in a curious decision re-appointed Ratu Mara of the Alliance as Prime Minister. When the new government convened, the Alliance quickly lost a vote of no-confidence requiring a new election to be called. During the subsequent elections, the Alliance government saw to the jailing of Butadroka and when the results were in, the Alliance had won a resounding victory with 36 out of the 52 seats.

The Federation victory in the March-April elections signalled that Fijian political paramountcy was no longer acknowledged by Indians. A struggle for power was on.

The Royal Commission on Electoral Reform of 1975

The conflict between Indians and Fijians over representation consumed most of the negotiation time of the NFP and Alliance delegates at the Constitutional Conference between 1968 and 1970. But the issues were partly and temporarily resolved. As pointed out earlier, on the system of representation the Alliance accepted the common roll as a long term objective, and acceded to the NFP demands that a Royal Commission be established sometime between the first and second elections after independence to open and re-examine the entire issue of common versus communal roll. Indians lived in hopeful anticipation that some day they would be granted electoral equity. In 1975, the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform was appointed. The report of the Commission submitted for public scrutiny called for a modification of the communal system of representation. The proposed modifications to the

[35] Cited in Premdas, "Constitutional challenge...", op. cit.

[36] Ralph R. Premdas, "Elections in Fiji: Restoration of the balance in September, 1977", **Journal of Pacific History**, 14(1), 1980.

system favoured Indian interests. If its recommendations had been accepted by the Fijian-dominated government, given the persistence of intransigent communal voting behaviour the Indian party would probably have wrested power away from the incumbents, upsetting the balance in the distribution of spheres of influence and Fijian political control in particular. The recommendations of the Royal Commission were therefore rejected outright by the ruling régime. With the rejection, a shadow of illegitimacy descended on the government. To Indians, the Fijian Prime Minister had broken his word for fear of losing power. To Fijians, it was the right thing to do in order to maintain balance in the system. More salient, however, was that the old problem of reconciling common roll with communal roll was once again on the political agenda. However unfairly Indians felt that they were treated by the communal representation, it was the only non-violent mechanism available to effect a change of government.

Elections continued to be bitterly fought and to exacerbate ethnic tensions between Fijians and Indians. In the 1983 elections when the NFP came close to winning over the Alliance, the Great Council of Chiefs threatened that "blood [would] flow" if Indians persisted in their quest for political power. The 1986 elections actually put things to a test. Whereas in the elections of 1977 and 1983 NFP victory was barely within reach, in the 1987 elections the NFP objective was actually attained. What is significant for us is that the failure of the Alliance government to accede to electoral reform so as to satisfy Indian demands for electoral equity led in part to a zero-sum struggle to win control over the government. While Fijians thought that the doctrine of political paramountcy legitimized future claims to govern in perpetuity, to Indians and other aggrieved citizens of Fiji, the electoral mechanism had to be altered to force the Alliance out of power.

An overview of the impact of the three preceding events points to significant challenges to all of the fundamental compromises that were reached and embodied in the 1970 constitution. Both Indian and Fijian dissidents undermined the consensus built into the constitution. The Mara-Koya rapprochement following the signing of the 1970 constitution offered a temporary buffer against the immediate dismantling of the compromises in the constitution. But from 1975 onwards, all fundamental constitutional ideas, from Fijian political paramountcy (seemingly guaranteed by expected Alliance victories in all foreseeable elections) to Indian citizenship, were challenged by outbidders. Towards the end of the 1970s, outbidder sniping had its desired results. Mara and Koya attacked each other bitterly to counter the charges levelled against each by his respective party that he had "sold out". The rift between the two men grew and was never repaired. The comity factor which sustained the formal legal compromises in the constitution was destroyed. Like a set of falling dominoes, thereafter all cross-communal agreements were functionally nullified as open hostility marked inter–communal relations. To be sure, the 1970 constitution remained formally intact, but it lacked the legitimacy and vibrancy that came from inter-communal support, especially among elites whose behaviour structured Fijian-Indian mass relations.

VI. A Second Round in Ethnic Conflict Resolution: The Quest For a Government of National Unity

An unstable state of affairs existed, and throughout the first half of the 1980s was exacerbated by growing inter-communal distrust. One final attempt was launched to rescue the state from political disaster: the formation of a government of national unity.

By 1980, a new leadership had taken over the splintered Indian-based Federation Party: the lawyer Jai Ram Reddy. For a short time, it appeared that a new era of comity was about to be inaugurated as Mara and Reddy launched a discourse on the unsatisfactory nature of inter-communal relations in Fiji. The proposal for a government of national unity was set forth by Mara. The ostensible reasons for the unity proposals related to the question of political

legitimacy and parliamentary representation.[37] Mara argued that the lack of adequate representation cultivated disloyalty and frustrations among the communal group that lost the elections. He noted that "issues are always discussed on the basis of which race will gain, not as to whether the country will benefit."[38] Over a period of time, this type of politics created conditions for total conflict among communal groups threatening "destruction of what [had] already been achieved."[39] Because of the grip that ethnic identity had over national life, the society lived in fear that one day communal confrontation would plunge the state into civil war. A condition described as "crisis prone" by the Prime Minister pointed to the general instability that characterized a government that failed "to weld into a nation peoples with strong ethnic allegiances".[40]

When the leader of the opposition, Jai Ram Reddy agreed with Mara's views and noted that "economic development cannot take place when the two communities which complement each other in the production of goods and services do not work in harmony. We must know that one community cannot prosper when another stands to perish."[41] The opposition leader went on to underscore the point that "after ten years of independence, no nationalism exists, only communalism."[42] Reddy and Mara both predicted that if current trends continued, conflict and confrontation would eventually lead to communal violence. The two communal leaders had arrived at almost identical conclusions regarding the detrimental effects of Fiji's racial politics. They also agreed that the prevailing constitutional and political structures were inadequate to restrain communal sentiments in national political life. They concurred, again, that there had to be institutional reforms if the deepening cleavages pointing almost inevitably to national catastrophe were to be arrested.

The Prime Minister proposed that the political solution to Fiji's persistent communal malaise resided in what he termed "a government of national unity." Power-sharing in the national cabinet would be utilized to bring together the two ethnic groups. In opting for a government of national unity, Mara had explicitly rejected a coalition arrangement between the Alliance and the NFP and instead preferred a "consensus" arrangement to promote inter-ethnic harmony.

Reddy agreed that the solution resided in some form of joint government. To him, whether the form was consociationalism, coalition, or government of national unity, was subordinate to what he called "any arrangement that is honourable".[43] Reddy raised issues which related to land, discrimination in the public service, the lack of consultation with the opposition, and the need to bargain and compromise as preliminary processes to establish any kind of consensual government.

The leader of the opposition was put in a quandary when the concrete proposals for a government of national unity were set forth. His party, which had been publicly rived by dissension until a year before (September 1979), was still recuperating from the self-inflicted wounds that attended the infighting of the previous four years. Weak both in parliamentary numbers and in internal cohesion, it was challenged to what seemed the higher purpose of preserving communal peace in Fiji. Clearly, the Federation Party would not be negotiating from a position of strength: it could not have been much weaker in parliamentary terms. As it stood, apart from the substantive issues that needed attention, it was genuinely feared that a

[37] Ralph R.Premdas, "Towards a government...", op. cit.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.

powerful Alliance machine would absorb the Federation Party, eliminating the identity of the latter in a government of national unity. Reddy insisted that: "It is pertinent to raise these issues while we are talking about a government of national unity."[44] Referring to the Alliance's government policies, Reddy queried; "Can you sow the seeds of strife and sue for peace? Is this how we build national unity?"[45]

Mara's reply essentially amounted to a withdrawal of his proposal for government of national unity. He blamed this action on the attitude of the Federation Party and the opposition leader. In effect, the Alliance said that the remarks of the opposition leader were offensive, for they questioned the sincerity of the Alliance's motives in advocating a government of national unity. But in setting forth the reply of the Federation Party, Mara specifically addressed issues which were vital to Fijians. Like Reddy, Mara could not enter any form of government without preserving the interests of his constituents. Mara blamed Reddy for torpedoing the unity proposals. Reddy returned the blame, suggesting that the proposal for a government of national unity was merely "a public relations gimmick." Both Mara and Reddy agreed that discussions of the proposals between them had never got underway before they were submitted to public perusal.

The breakdown of the "negotiations" for a government of national unity turned the clock back in inter-ethnic relations. The leader of the Federation claimed that the practices of the Alliance government tended to undermine vital Indian interests in relation to land and employment opportunities. To the Federation Party, the governing Alliance was unprepared to treat Indians as equal citizens free from state discriminatory practices. The Alliance proposals for a government of national unity offered a solution that was tantamount to the dissolution of the Federation Party, placing government under the paramount control of the Alliance. One choice and only one choice was open to the Federation Party: to win the elections and control over the government so as to alter its policies. Put differently, the mode of ethnic conflict resolution had moved away from consociation and sharing towards victory and dominance. The sharing of power and privileges in the sectoral division of labour implied by the concept of balance was set aside.

In the 1982 elections, a bitter campaign was waged by both sides, and until the last week prior to the elections it appeared that the Alliance was likely to lose to the Federation Party acting in loose concert with a Fijian splinter party, the Western United Front. When this failed, in the next round of elections scheduled for 1987, the Federation would join with the newly formed Labour Party to oust the ruling Alliance Party from power. A new form of struggle marked by zero-sum contest for power was inaugurated. It is useful to look briefly at these elections which led up to the first military intervention in May of that year. It is important to note that the military intervened a second time in September 1987.

VII. The Elections of 1987 and Military Intervention

The main premise of our argument thus far has been that the set of deals and compromises which the constitution-makers struck in 1970 were eroded so thoroughly by the mid-1980s that only a bare constitutional skeleton devoid of its spirit continued to exist. Comity between the Fijian and Indian political elites had been destroyed. Balance in the distribution of power and privileges was superseded by a fierce zero-sum struggle for dominance of the state. The military intervention of May 1987 formalized a constitutional funeral that was long overdue. Both Fijian and Indian party leaders contributed to the undermining of the constitutional balance that was formalized in 1970. Fijian leaders succumbed to outbidders, such as the FNP's Butadroka, and resorted to administrative practices that negated the Indians' equal access to state opportunities and resources. Indians' access to land was curtailed as the

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

government returned crown land to the Fijian domain instead of making it available to the land-hungry farmers. Indian access to scholarships and promotions was circumscribed, causing frustration and reinforcing their impression of being treated as second-class citizens. Budgetary allocations were tilted consistently in favour of projects benefiting Fijians. All of this was perceived to be true and unjust by Indians. They then questioned the value of their citizenship. The Bill of Rights failed to protect them against discrimination. The prospect of improvement was bleak within the context of the concept of balance. Indians thereafter organized themselves to acquire political power through elections so as to improve their economic well-being.

Not only was the Indians' desire for more land and employment opportunities considered greedy by Fijians, but Indians' "deliberate schemes" to win power and overthrow the balance in the distribution of spheres of pre-eminence was seen as a serious threat. Fijians did not see such Indian electoral behaviour as a defensive move made in reaction to discrimination against them. For Fijians, this was a surreptitious grab for power by Indians in defiance of the balancing principle that accorded control of the government to Fijians. Both Fijians and Indians interpreted their actions in self-serving ways. In the absence of third party adjudication, the acts of each section in prophetic fulfilment confirmed the fears of ethnic dominance imputed to the other. Vital interests were at stake for both the Indian and Fijian communities.

In Fiji, the elections of 1987 represented a major disjuncture in ethnic claims and counter-claims that were left outstanding and festering. We turn first to the elections of 1987 in this section. Next, the historic military interventions, which resolved the situation of uncertainty, are considered.

The 1987 general elections were the fifth in Fiji's history since independence. In most respects, the basic features of these elections were similar to previous ones. To begin with, the electoral system remained a combination of communal and national seats. The prescribed parliamentary ethnic ratios were 22 Indians, 22 Fijians, and 8 General Electors (Europeans, Chinese, mixed races, etc.). The elections were for the 52 seats in the House of Assembly and were administered by the politically neutral Elections Commission.

The main actors in the elections were the two established parties, the Indian-based National Federation Party and the Fijian-based Alliance Party. The major addition among the party contestants was the Fiji Labour Party (FLP). The FLP had grown out of a struggle between the Alliance-run government and the Fiji Trades Union Congress in 1985.[46] Faced with demands for higher wages and salaries but a shrinking revenue base and increased deficits, the ruling régime imposed a prolonged wage freeze. Public servants, both Fijians and Indians, were bitterly aggrieved. They were however among the best educated, highest paid, and most organized sectors of the country's population. In effect, they were prepared to confront the Alliance government. A strike was threatened by the Public Service Union which was constituted of civil servants who formed part of the Trade Union Congress. Faced with the crippling of the country's vital services, the Alliance government threatened to retaliate by sending in the Fiji Royal Armed Forces to break the strike. Fiji workers would not forget this frustrating experience. The government won the stand-off by the threat of military force. But in the next elections, the workers sought vengeance on the ruling party.

As the FLP was formed almost two years before the 1987 elections, it had ample time to build a grassroots organization to challenge the Alliance Party in electoral battle. Demonstrating its credibility, the FLP competed in local elections soon after it was formed and won most of the seats in the city council elections in the ethnically mixed capital city of Suva. This victory

[46] R.T. Robertson, "The formation of the Fiji Labor Party", **New Zealand Monthly Review**, October 1985.

stunned the Alliance régime. In a by-election for a vacant parliamentary seat, the FLP came within a whisker of winning what was traditionally a stronghold electorate of the Alliance.

However, electoral performance in local and by-elections is not necessarily a convincing indicator of how voters will respond to the intense mass communal appeals which tend to occur in country-wide general elections. The FLP faced the formidable task of confronting both the Indian-based Federation Party and Fijian-based Alliance Party. To win a majority, it had to break the entrenched communal patterns of voter preference. Several fortuitous events transpired to help the FLP defy the odds and romp home to an astonishing victory. First, the Federation Party was torn internally by fierce factional infighting to the point where several of its key members resigned and a few joined the Labour Party. The enfeebled NFP, faced with its own probable humiliation at the polls, was persuaded to join the Labour Party in a coalition arrangement. The popular Indian leader, Jai Ram Reddy, although he had stepped down from the formal leadership of the NFP, played a pivotal backroom role among the Labour-Federation coalition strategists in swinging the Indian vote to the coalition.

The second critical event that contributed to the success of the Labour-Federation coalition pertained to the fissures within the Fijian community. In particular, the Western United Front (WUF) which represented the interests of disgruntled Fijians in the Western Division of Viti Levu, continued to mobilize its supporters in co-operation with the Labour Party. Also, the Fijian Nationalist Party headed by Sakiasi Butadroka, even though defeated and harassed in previous elections, commanded the loyalty of some 5 to 8 per cent of Fijians. In a number of critical constituencies where Indian/Fijian population ratios were roughly equivalent, small parties like the WUF and the Nationalists upset the Fijian-based Alliance Party. The other major division in the Fijian community came from the Labour Party itself whose leader was a Fijian commoner, Dr. Timoci Bavadra, and whose economic programme was critical of the government's treatment of the poor and disadvantaged who were mainly Fijians. The "Bavadra factor" also elicited votes from Fijians who were critical of the political dominance of Fijians by their chiefs.

It was therefore from within the recesses and the cracks in the established Fijian and Indian parties and communities that Labour squeezed out critical margins in certain electorates. In a polity where communal loyalties still predominated, issues played an unusually important part in determining the outcome. Some credibility can be assigned to the claim that Labour's campaign around economic issues, especially the wage freeze, alleged government corruption and the plight of the poor and unemployed, dampened the enthusiasm of the indigenous Fijian voter in turning out to vote. In an astounding election statistic, it was shown that only 70 per cent of the indigenous Fijians turned out to vote as compared with 85 per cent in the 1982 election. Certainly, if these Fijians had turned out and all of them had voted for the Alliance Party, Labour's challenge would have been squashed. But no one knows for whom the absentee Fijian would have voted. It was quite probable that many of these voters were disenchanted with the Alliance Party and might have voted Labour.

There was an ideological issue which periodically got thrown into the campaign fray. Specifically, the Alliance charged that the Labour Party had socialist leanings and would, in victory, bring the Russians and "chaos, bloodshed, and instantly instability"[47] to Fiji. Apart from strongly advocating a programme to redress the class inequalities in Fiji and making the government more accessible and accountable, the Labour-Federation coalition also promised to alter the country's foreign policy to one of non-alignment. Under Prime Minister Mara, Fiji had been a faithful ally of Western hegemony in the South Pacific. Mara had banned Russian vessels from Fiji's territorial waters while permitting United States nuclear vessels to dock.[48]

[47] N. Delaibatiki, "Challenge to coalition", **Fiji Sun**, 24 March 1987, p.1. See also D. Sharma, "Labor's socialism perilous, voters warned", **Fiji Sun**, 28 March 1987, p. 2.

[48] Ralph Premdas and Mike Howard, "Vanuatu's foreign policy", **Australian Outlook**, August 1985.

The Labour-Federation coalition firmly promised to follow New Zealand's lead in forbidding all nuclear vessels from Pacific ports. It also announced that it would re-align Fiji's foreign policy to maximize benefits to Fiji. It would not invite the Russians, however, to establish an embassy in Suva.

This ideological issue, emphasized particularly by the Alliance as the elections came closer, also raised the problem of Labour's policy on nationalization. The Labour coalition did not see anything wrong with nationalization per se and pointed to the successful case of the Alliance purchase of the foreign-owned sugar company, the Colonial Sugar Refinery, which had at one time dominated Fiji's economic life. Labour, however, did not have an extensive programme for nationalization. In its election manifesto, it said it would nationalize the country's only gold mining company (Emperor), and would seek partnerships in other businesses. This apart, the Labour coalition indicated that it would continue the country's reliance on foreign investment to promote Fiji's economic growth.

Apart from its half-hearted charges of the socialist leanings of the Labour Party, the Alliance denied the charge of the Fijian Nationalist Party that it had failed to give special advantages to the Fijians who were poor. It denied, but not too convincingly, the charge that it had become old and corrupt. It appealed to Indian voters by recapitulating its record of making Indian tenure more secure and making more land available to Indian farmers. But the Alliance resorted to other standard electioneering artillery that it had used in the past. In particular, it sought to appeal to Fijians by claiming that they could lose their land with a change of government.[49] The Labour-Federation coalition was described as the old Indian menace in disguise with popular Indian leader Jai Ram Reddy the real power behind the coalition scene, which was surreptitious use of the fear of racial domination by Indians to ensure the loyalty of the Fijian voter.[50] An Alliance stalwart ominously warned that "without the Alliance in power, this country could turn into another Uganda where Indians were made to leave".[51] With regard to the issue of Fijian chiefs, the Alliance charged that the Labour-Federation coalition was intent on eliminating the traditional system of indigenous leadership. It also charged that Labour would fire the Fijian governor-general.

It remains to be answered what role the communal vote assumed in the election outcome. Apart from a small but significant percentage of votes, the evidence points unequivocally to the conclusion that the communal factor, as in past elections, was the main factor influencing voters in the 1987 general elections. Several indicators uphold this conclusion. First, in an electoral system where there were separate communal and national constituencies, all the communal seats (Indian; Fijian; and general electors) were won overwhelmingly by the Alliance party or the Labour-Federation coalition. The coalition did not, however, directly challenge any Alliance communal seat. The Federation component (under Jai Ram Reddy) delivered the Indian communal votes to the Labour-Federation coalition. Second, in those national seats where either Indians or Fijians overwhelmingly predominated, the respective Labour-Federation or Alliance candidates won easily. Third, in the four critical national seats that the Labour-Federation coalition took away from the Alliance, despite a slim Fijian majority the Labour-Federation was able to draw a sufficient number of Fijians to add to the Indian vote for victory.[52] In effect, in these cases, the indigenous Fijians did not cast their ballots across the communal divide. The aggregate data from the elections also confirmed the conclusion that the pattern of voting was communally-bound. In previous elections, Indians tended to give about 15 per cent of their votes to the Alliance Party. In the 1987 elections, this remained unchanged. In Indian communal seats, the Labour-Federation coalition obtained 82

[49] "Gutter level politics", **Fiji Sun**, 28 March 1987, p. 2.

[50] "Reddy slams politics of race", **Fiji Sun**, 28 March 1987, p. 2.

[51] K. Iyer, "No bias for Lau", **Fiji Sun**, 28 March 1987, p. 1.

[52] V. Kumar, "Why Alliance won key national seats", **Fiji Times**, 13 April 1987, p. 7.

per cent of Indian votes whereas in 1982 the Federation Party obtained 83 per cent. In the Fijian communal seats, the Alliance obtained 78 per cent in 1987 compared to 82 per cent in 1982. In the General Communal seats, the Alliance support fell from 89 per cent in 1982 to 82 per cent in 1987. Essentially, then, a sectional voting pattern persisted in the communal seats. Fijians in previous elections gave only 2 per cent of their votes to the Federation Party. In 1987, they gave 9 per cent to the Labour-Federation coalition. It was mainly in the national constituencies that the Alliance lost votes to the coalition. It was the split Fijian community, the absentee Fijian vote, and in particular the role of splinter parties in four critical constituencies that led to the Labour-Federation victory. It is safe to conclude, therefore, that in the 1987 general elections, communal voting dominated the elections, especially in the communal seats and in the safe Indian and Fijian national seats which accounted for 48 out of the 52 seats in the House of Representatives. Even though in four critical electorates a small swing of Fijians to the coalition occurred and accounted for the defeat of the Alliance Party, the overall results were not about class realignment of voter preference.

VIII. Labour's 33 Days in Office and Acts of Destabilization

The victory of the Labour-Federation coalition was a signal event in Fiji. In an editorial, the Fiji Times said:

> "There have always been those who doubted the people of Fiji, who said we would never live together in harmony, never reconcile our differences. But yesterday the people spoke. Although coming from different religions, many backgrounds, we are yet one people. So the greater victory is for democracy."[53]

For the Alliance, its loss represented a fundamental violation of its political eminence which it had thought was embedded in the Deed of Cession and premised in the concept of balance. The Fijian elites had not anticipated losing control of the government at any time in the future and hence, after the elections were over, they conspired to regain power. Almost as soon as Dr. Bavadra and his government were sworn in, a grumble commenced about alleged Indian dominance in the government. Dr. Bavadra himself was Fijian and he took the sensitive portfolios of Fijian and Home Affairs, close to native Fijian interests. In a cabinet of 14 members, 6 posts went to Fijians, 1 to a general elector, and 7 to Indians. Bavadra, as a commoner, was very careful during his first days of office to pay homage to the Fijian hierarchy. Despite this, he had no way of judging how great a threat his leadership posed to the entrenched privileges and traditional powers of the Fijian chiefs. Among native Fijians, there was initially a silent acceptance of the change of guard.

The fact that a Fijian remained Prime Minister temporarily assuaged Fijian anxieties of the future of Fiji under an Indian-dominated government. It took the deliberate and systematic instigation of latent Fijian fears by a small contingent of disaffected Alliance leaders to arouse Fijians to mass action. At meetings and demonstrations organized and led by Alliance parliamentarians and former cabinet ministers, Fijians were told that the Bavadra government was a front for Indian interests and that their immediate objective was to deprive Fijians of ownership and control of their land. Labelled the "Taukei Movement", the meetings gradually picked up momentum. What began as small half-hearted gatherings evolved to include road blocks, fire-bombings and outright racist appeals to Fijians.[54]

Soon the streets of Suva and Lautoka, Fiji's largest cities, were controlled by the demonstrators. Less than three weeks after taking office, the Labour-Federation government was in grievous straits, jolted and increasingly destabilized to the point of paralysis. The placards of the demonstrators articulated fear of the loss of land as the centre-piece of the

[53] "The people's day", **Fiji Times**, 13 April 1987, p. 6.

[54] For stories, see **Fiji Sun**, 4, 5 and 6 May 1987.

protests, despite the fact that the government did nothing and could do nothing constitutionally to infringe any aspect of Fijian land ownership. Some of the placards also expressed apprehensions that Fiji's indigenous people would be reduced to a permanent and impoverished minority in their own land, as have Maoris and Aborigines in New Zealand and Australia. Finally, some placards threatened outright eviction of Indians from Fiji along Ugandan lines. Overall, the Labour-Federation government was sure that funding for the demonstrations came from foreign sources.

It was in the shadow of the demonstrations and breakdown of order directly instigated by the Taukei Movement that the military intervened. The leader of the intervention, Lieutenant Colonel Rabuka, third-in-command of the Fijian Armed Forces, declared that the military had assumed power in order to prevent ethnic conflagration and to pre-empt the government's call on the military to repress the Fijian people. The coup leader echoed the fears and demands of the Taukei demonstrators. The military junta proclaimed that "Fiji was for Fijians", and that in their own land, Fijians would not be dominated by an alien group. Only a Fijian-run government could protect Fijian interests. To this end, the military announced the abrogation of the 1970 constitution and the preparation of a new one in which Fijian political paramountcy would be guaranteed in perpetuity.

IX. The Political Dimension of Ethnic Conflict and Development

It is our task in this part to evaluate the impact that persistent communal strife has had on development in Fiji. In the Third World, the condition of multi-ethnicity must be incorporated in any explication of the development idea. The Fiji case demonstrates that economic and political change has been entwined in the communal interests and claims of Fijians, Indians, and others. In essence, this implies that planned change has been complicated by the presence of the pervasive ethnic factor rendering all ordinary political and economic calculations more complex if not more irrational and intractable. Put differently, development plans and strategies must be designed in contemplation of the interests of communal constituencies regardless of whether such claims tend to increase costs, protract solutions, and involve "irrational and wasteful" allocation of scarce resources. In the multi-ethnic states, policies which win legitimacy and stand a chance of implementation must engage and incorporate divergent communal claims. Policies are perceived and appraised through the ethnic prism.

Few theories of development take account of the ethos of ethnicity in the typical Third World environment. It is often relegated to the scrap heap as an aberrant nuisance that will in time dissolve and disappear. For the purposes of this paper, the many theories of development can be conveniently reduced to two: the modernization and the political economy schools. The modernization strategy of development emphasizes maintaining order through evolving new norms and institutions which perform the fixed functions of a stable society.[55] This approach encapsulates its goals in a series of processes which have often been stated as a set of interlocking and sequential steps, namely: participation, legitimacy, identity, integration, penetration and distribution.[56] Above all, in the process of transformation, the political modernization school, while acknowledging the environment of internal cultural pluralism, has tended to see this as a barrier that will be submerged and eradicated as institutionalization takes root and a new society is born. The modernization process, in effect, will impart a levelling effect over the "distortions" erected by traditional communal attachments to

[55] See S. Huntington, **Political Order in Changing Societies**, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968; G. Almond and B. Powell, **Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach**, Boston: Little and Brown, 1968; G. Almond and J. Coleman (eds.), **The Politics of Developing Areas**, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960; G. Almond and S. Verba, **The Civic Culture**, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.

[56] L. Binder et al. (eds.) **Crises and Sequences in Political Development**, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962; W. Rostow, **The Stages of Economic Growth**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960.

produce, in the end, a new homogenous person and society. It is critical to note that the integrationist and assimilationist perspectives built into this approach have tended to underestimate the durability of ethnic identities and boundaries.

While the modernization school tends to stress the role of internal political, cultural and economic factors in accounting for the condition of Third World "backwardness", the political economy approach points to the role of imperialism and capitalism. The emphasis is placed on class criteria and economic and property relations. Ethnic consciousness is seen as false consciousness that will dissolve and disappear as revolutionary transformation takes place.[57]

From these two major schools, a number of issues and aims of political development are identified as significant even though the ethnic variable has been neglected. In a definitional paper prepared by Rudolfo Stevenhagen presented at an UNRISD conference in Geneva in March 1990 (Ethnic Conflict and Development: Research Project Guidelines, mimeo, 10 pages), several development aims and issues were crystallized in the context of a communal environment for use in examining individual case histories such as Fiji. Based on these sources - the modernization-development school, the dependency-Marxist perspective, and Stavenhagen's perspectives - a synthetic analysis follows. A list of inter-related political problems salient for measuring political development in multi-ethnic states bedevilled with persistent communal strife is also included. The interrelated categories and criteria pertain to legitimacy, unity, order, minority and human rights, as well as institutions and various mechanisms of ethnic conflict resolution.

X. The Political Costs of Ethnic Conflict in Fiji

With the promulgation of the new, inegalitarian, constitution in 1990, the communal conflict in Fiji became fully institutionalized. Throughout Fijian history up to the time of the first military coup in 1987, the seeds of collective sectional conflict were laid in the very making of the multi-ethnic state. In the post-coup period, the political costs of the ethnic conflict have proven to be extensive and include the loss of régime legitimacy, the destruction of democracy, pervasive human rights violations, and persistent instability. Once ethnic consciousness became the animating force that defined competition for the values and resources of the state, all political institutions - parties, voluntary associations, the electoral system, parliament, civil service, judiciary, diplomatic services, and the army and police - became infected by it. It is as if the twisted contours of ethnic preference, antagonistically expressed against other similar solidarity groups, possessed such irresistible power that every political structure derived its form and practice from its governing principles. Inter-ethnic suspicion and antipathy were not confined to a few select practices and separated from others; allowed to grow on the crucible of continuing electoral competition, after universal adult suffrage was introduced in 1963, they slowly extended their tentacles to all institutions. The entire imported parliamentary apparatus was, from the inception of the system of representation, imbued with communal motifs that became transformed into symbols impregnated with vital communal interests dividing one citizen from the other, and failed to offer any form of unity to the state.

The first major casualty stemming from the communalization of political competition in the allocation of values has been the loss of régime legitimacy. Democratic governments are erected on the intangible factor of moral consent. The term "legitimacy" embodies this idea: it suggests that governments derive their right to rule and can expect citizen compliance and co-

[57] See P. Baran, **The Political Economy of Growth**, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1957; Andre Gunder Frank, **Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America**, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967; S. Amin, **Unequal Development**, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976; A. Emmanuel, **Unequal Exchange**, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972; T. dos Santos, "The structures of dependence," **American Economic Review**, May 1970.

operation when and only when the accepted rules of establishing and administering government are followed. As a phenomenon locked into the cultural system of society, legitimacy is easily established in those polities that are undergirded and integrated by a body of shared institutions and customs. But this does not necessarily mean that legitimacy cannot be established without value consensus. These unifying values facilitate but do not guarantee consent and acceptance of a government and its right to rule. It is quite conceivable that in a state with a diversity of cultural systems, legitimacy can be forged through compromise. If, however, such states evolve ethnically-infused antagonistic relationships, then legitimacy is bound to be lost. The Fiji case illustrates all of this. One example discussed above was the 1980 attempt by the leaders of the Fijian and Indian parties to establish a government of national unity. Had this effort succeeded, it is quite conceivable that the trajectory of intensifying ethnic conflict would have been arrested and a new order of inter-communal amity inaugurated. On the contrary, however, the two political parties not only failed to reconcile their differences but proceeded to a new round of rivalry that further exacerbated the divisions in the state.

The theory advanced here postulates that at any early stage, group consciousness can actually be restrained and made into a positive force of identity formation and group solidarity. But if systematically sustained by personal ambition and elite interests, negative momentum builds, spreads over a widening array of institutions, until a threshold of virtually uncontrollable inter-group mass behaviour is attained. The first political casualty is the legitimacy of the ruling régime. In Fiji the critical mass was facilitated by zero-sum competition elections as well as by ethnic chauvinists such as Sakiasi Butadroka. The upshot is the creation of "an ethnic state" marked by internal communal discord. Apart from the fact that the state is created and marked by a system of ethnic stratification lacks a consensus over its basic institutions, it is also in its totality the repository of jobs, contracts, and other policy opportunities. Any communal party that captures it can overwhelm the others by bringing the state to the service of its own particular interests. As was shown above, this occurred in Fiji. State power was so overwhelmingly powerful, concentrated and centralized, that it could be used as an instrument for promoting personal ambition as well as ethnic domination, and even genocide. In the post-coup period, all of these features assumed reality.

Cultural pluralism and the absence of overarching values and institutions can together be considered as the factors that laid the foundation of ethnic conflict in Fiji with its attendant destructive effects on all development efforts. The factors that triggered ethnic conflict were clearly identifiable but occurred at different times during the evolution of the problem. These factors were the introduction of mass democratic politics and zero-sum rivalry over resource allocation. In order to understand why these factors could be classified as "triggering," it is necessary to conceive of the problem cumulatively. At various times, a particular triggering factor deposited a layer of division which in turn provided the next step for the deposit of a new layer of forces in the accumulating crisis. These "accumulations" could have been neutralized if not entirely reversed. It is for this reason that the idea of a trigger is suggested for each stage of the evolving crisis situation. The idea is that there was nothing automatic about the transition to the next stage. To be sure, it would appear that after a number of successive reinforcing deposits of divisive forces, a certain momentum had been attained so that every issue became inflammable. The state was then in perpetual crisis, which was expressed in perennial ongoing ethnic tensions.

Universal adult suffrage was introduced in 1963 bringing Fijians and Indians into head-on collision over control of the state. Political mobilization occurred along ethnic lines. Ethnic outbidders soon appeared and exacerbated the communal divisions driving the two major parties apart. The modus vivendi succumbed to a deepening pattern of ethnic priorities that drew the state towards political disaster. It is difficult to locate precisely the time when the question of ethnic shares became an issue in the struggle between the Fijian and Indian

communal sections. In a sense, the entire colonially-constructed ethnic pyramid not only embodied resource allocation but explained its existence. Fijians had claimed the public bureaucracy as their own preserve. Indian-Fijian conflict can therefore be explained, as was done above, by this post-independence competition over public jobs and generally public resource allocation. The Indian entry into the public service was seen as an unwarranted intrusion into the Fijian domain. It is clear that scarce resources and competition over jobs did play a role as a triggering factor in sustaining inter-communal conflict.

Thus the ethnic state was created on the anvil of a combination of predisposing and triggering factors. From the very outset, a politically distorted state was fashioned. The cornerstone of the society was not laid with developmental aims in mind. The ethnic factor fed into all issues and institutions in the post-independence period with the ultimate effects of destruction of legitimacy, persistence of instability and loss of democracy. Would it not have been possible, however, to reverse the strong communal affiliations, or make them work positively, perhaps by a system of power-sharing? Once ethnic strife had become persistent, even institutionalized in the social structure, and embedded in individual behaviour, could co-operation efforts still flourish?

One of the grievous harms caused by persistent and protracted strife in a multi-ethnic society is often loss of the will and capacity to reconcile. After many years of ongoing communal struggle, it would appear that a sentiment of fatalism enters through the back door of consciousness and compels the battered psyche to accept the ethnic battle and adaptations to it as inevitable and permanent. A new socio-cultural architecture of human settlement and communal interaction emerges, with the following elements: a broken will, enfeebled and unprepared for reconciliation, reinforced by countless symbols of battles won and lost, as well as organizations and interests which institutionalize and structure the conflict. To be sure, at any earlier time, the leaders and elites in the various ethnic communities might have been able to communicate and beat out compromises for inter-communal co-existence. But as conflict continues and deepens, even the upper layers of society become victims of inter-communal intransigence. The ethnic monster devours everyone in the end.

Compromise and co-operation are the very heart of the developmental process. This is true of all social structures, integrated and divided alike. The democratic fabric itself is constituted of give-and-take in beating out public policy, based on a culture and psychology of mutual trust in exchanges. The mortar of co-operation and compromise maintains the integrity of the edifice of society. In the multi-ethnic states of the Third World, the tension in working out mutually satisfactory exchanges is often strained by the fact that cleavages and differences are ethnicized. Protracted institutional ethnic conflict undermines the culture and psychology of co-operation, rendering collective development difficult if not impossible.

Compromise and co-operation are embodied in devices for conflict resolution. In Fiji, compromise and co-operation came alive and were implemented in the system of balance. When balance was no longer operative and was replaced by the quest for paramountcy and power by Indians and Fijians, each group settled into its own niche in the ethnically-influenced structure. When it seemed that communal tension and ethnic rivalry were beyond control, the Labour-Federation party (an amalgam of Indians and Fijians) came to power. With this new structure, the opportunity for cross-cultural legitimacy in government was given a new lease on life. This however was quickly torpedoed by the military intervention which put an end to all pretences at establishing a multi-cultural government. The costs are very real for they include the persistent threat of destabilization by those who are excluded. The effects are registered in a new repressive order inimical to all citizens.

The seizure of power by the Royal Fiji Military Forces to keep “Fiji for Fijians”, and the subsequent promulgation of the new inegalitarian constitution of July 1990, destroyed the

basis for a legitimate and stable régime. The loss of political legitimacy, violations of human rights and threat of subversion together constitute the most formidable political costs that have accompanied ethnic conflict in Fiji.

XI. The Economic, Cultural and Psycho-Social Dimensions

The ramifications of ethnic strife tend to be expressed most tangibly over the long run in the economic sphere. The environment of inter-communal malaise is fraught with tension and every event is interpreted in terms of ethnic preferences and antipathies, which is clearly an unhealthful environment for integral human development. In the cultural area, communal strife fosters narrow-minded and intolerant ethno-centrism and chauvinism. Cultures become cradles of hate, bigotry, and negative stereotyping. Together, the economic, psychological, and cultural impacts of persistent ethnic conflict can destroy the welfare, positive cultural qualities, and spiritual expression of a people. In this section we briefly examine these repercussions of communal conflict in Fiji.

The Economic Dimension

Perhaps the most crucial feature of the economic environment in the typical plural society that has been created by colonization is its specialization and complementarity. The specialized parts of the economy have tended to emerge as areas of ethnic concentration so that over time each economic sector becomes the de facto preserve or territory of one or another ethnic section. This is clearly demonstrated in the case of Fiji. The major productive and distributive components of the economy are dominated by Fijians, Indians, and Europeans. As was described above, in Fiji this system of economic ethnic specialization evolved into the doctrine of balance with each ethnic group dominating in its own sphere of economic influence. Europeans retained pre-eminence in large businesses such as banking and manufacturing; Indians in sugar production and in medium to small scale businesses; and Fijians in land holdings and in the public bureaucracy. To be sure, inter-ethnic overlaps exist, but generally, these spheres have evolved as separate territorial preserves.

The creation of this ethnically specialized economy, while it initially facilitated the maintenance of political order, contained the germs of its own self-destruction when significant changes occurred in the society's movement from colonization to independence. More particularly, when a communal section that was hemmed into its economic and occupational niche decided to alter the terms of its participation in the informal balance, it found it could do so only by drastically threatening the niche of another community. Ethnic specialization entailed economic complementarity and dependence. Inter-ethnic co-operation was therefore vital to economic stability. When ethnic strife got out of control and escalated into confrontation, inevitably the economic levers of dependence were unleashed by one side or the other, wreaking havoc on the economic welfare of all citizens.

The creation of an economy of inter-dependent ethnic enclaves and spheres of influence also tends to result in important disparities in the distribution of material benefits. This disparity in turn feeds feelings of inter-communal malaise and can lead to ethnic conflagration. In Fiji, many indigenous Fijians regarded their lot as unfair since (on average) the Fijian as compared with the Indian, European, or Chinese, was poorer. Fijians who had been socialized into a subsistence pattern of economic life did not display the same level of acquisitiveness, individualism, and competitiveness as the other ethnic groups. Consequently, over time, in a growing market economy, Fijian economic well-being has become conspicuously inferior to other groups. As was shown earlier, outbidders used this as the basis for demands that government policies be put under the control of Fijians and designed to rectify Fijian disadvantage.

These came under intense strain after the military intervention of May 1987. Sugar production, the backbone of the economy, occupies over half of the country's arable land,

employs about a fifth of the work force, serves as the principal source of foreign exchange (38 per cent in 1990), and accounts for about 13.5 per cent of GNP. Fiji's sugar production is organized on small individual private plots of about four hectares. There are some 22,000 individual small growers, three-fifths of whom are Indians who supply sugar cane to the four sugar mills in Fiji. The critical political fact of the Fiji sugar industry in terms of inter-ethnic relations is the role of Indians as cultivators of sugar cane and Fijians as the main leasers of the land on which the sugar is cultivated. Indian-Fijian antipathy was literally grounded in an interlocking relationship between the labour of Indians and the land of Fijians, a combination that became oppositionally charged with irrational ethnic passions. The welfare of both Indians as sugar cultivators and Fijians as civil servants dependent for their salaries and wages on government revenues derived mainly from sugar was entwined. From the sugar sector, Indians collectively gained strength. Fijians observed Indian economic growth with alarm, especially when this was coupled with strident Indian demands for more land and political equality.

The costs of communally-inspired sabotage and strikes in response to the repercussions of the Fijian coup makers have been drastic, attesting to the fragility of the economy to inter-ethnic pressure.[58] Hence, in 1987 when Rabuka seized power asserting "Fiji for Fijians," the immediate response of Indian leaders was to invoke the sugar weapon as the means of counter-argument. Indian sugar farmers refused to harvest their cane in response to the eviction of the Labour-Federation Party from power. The cessation of sugar production at harvest time endangered access to premium sugar prices offered under the ACP/EC Sugar Protocol and other preferential arrangements. The Fijian military and the Taukei movement responded to Indian boycotts in the sugar industry by threatening to cancel all Indian land leases and evict Indians en masse from their farms.[59] This confrontation between its two primary ethnic parts brought the country to the brink of ethnic conflagration. Similar scenarios have been enacted again and again in a ruthless game of "ethnic chicken" between Indian leaders and the Fijian-controlled government from 1987 to the present.[60] Costs are registered both in the realm of economic losses and inter-ethnic relations. The continuing threat of the loss of their leases among Indian farmers has led the Landel-Mille Sugar Commission to report that "the nature of the land tenure by lease holders does not encourage capital investments in the form of machinery and other means of capital to boost productivity because of doubts on the renewal of leases during the 1990s."[61] Most Indian leases are due either for renewal or termination in the mid-1990s and given the state of Indian-Fijian relations, this does not augur well for the sugar industry and Fiji's future.

One of the more dramatic and immediate costs associated with the coup and the subsequent communal repression has been the flight of people, including many cane-growing families, out of Fiji. According to a survey carried out by the World Bank, the emigration loss was especially concentrated among those with skills badly needed by a developing country to maintain its economic well-being and sustain growth. Said the World Bank report:

> "Fiji's quite abundant supply of skills was threatened by the political events of 1987. Prior to them, about 500 workers emigrated annually; in the years following the coups d'état, emigration rose sharply to about 2,500 or 1 per cent of the work force. Emigration has particularly affected the supply of high- and middle-level staff. According to the Fiji Bureau of Statistics, of those employed at the time of the 1986

[58] The World Bank, **Fiji: Challenges for Development**, Washington: The World Bank, May 1990, p. 6.

[59] See "100 riot police deployed in the west", **Fiji Times**, 1 June 1991; "National Farmers' Union barred from holding meeting", **Fiji Times**, 5 June 1991, p. 1; "'Revoke decrees', NFU tells government", **Fiji Times**, 8 June 1991, p. 3; "Unions on alert for showdown", **Fiji Times**, 7 June 1991, p. 3; "Coalition hits new decrees", **Fiji Times**, 4 June 1991, p. 3.

[60] "Soldiers to cut cane?", **Fiji Times**, 5 June 1991, p. 1; "Church force to cut cane", **Fiji Times**, 7 June 1991, p. 1.

[61] "Sugar industry at crossroads", **Fiji Times**, 8 April 1991, p. 1.

> census, about 7 per cent of the professional and technical, 17 per cent of the administration and managerial, and 8 per cent of the clerical staff has left the country by late 1988...Key professions were particularly hard hit; it is reported that 70 per cent of the lawyers, over 50 per cent of the doctors, 40 per cent of the accountants, and many architects, engineers, technicians and teachers have recently left Fiji; vacancy rates from some key public services still range from 30 to 50 per cent."[62]

All theorists of economic development emphasize the importance of an ample supply of skilled labour and point especially to the need for middle-level managers and administrators which Fiji has been losing rapidly since the coups in 1987. The haemorrhage of skills has continued and increased: the Fiji Bureau of Statistics estimates migration at 3,048 persons for 5,118 persons for 1987; 5,496 for 1988; 5,510 for 1989; and 5,650 for 1990.[63] The ethnic composition given was 88 per cent Indians, 5-6 per cent Fijians, and 5-6 per cent others. In a typical month, July 1990 for example, of the 466 who emigrated, 420 were Indians, 20 Fijians, and 26 others. Of the total of 5,650 persons who migrated in 1990, some 169 were teachers, 128 architects and engineers, 57 medical, dental, and veterinary doctors, and 63 accountants. Altogether, about 40,000 persons had emigrated by 1992.

While the emigration of Indians served to reduce the size of the Indian presence in the population, the effects of the mass emigration have not been confined to the loss of gross numbers alone. More critically, these losses included not only persons who were skilled, but also many investors and entrepreneurs (Indians, Chinese, and Europeans) who found that the atmosphere of ethnic tension was not conducive to investment. When the military intervened for the first time, numerous investors withdrew their funds from banks and transferred them overseas leading to a crisis in the balance of payments. In the wake of this loss, Fiji devalued its currency twice in 1987, reducing its value by 30 per cent.

Reported the World Bank: "The immediate results included a sharp loss of business confidence, increased emigration, and capital flight."[64] The healthy trajectory of economic growth that was projected for Fiji prior to the coup quickly evaporated: "Incentives for foreign and new domestic investment were more effective in 1986 and 1987, when a number of new projects, mainly in tourism and production for export, were approved. Many investments were postponed, however, when the political crisis occurred."[65] By 1992, while some investors had returned and new ones from Asia and Japan had come, the loss of business confidence persisted.

Fiji needed investment to maintain its economic strength and to cope with its unemployment problems. In urban areas by 1990, unemployment was approximately 10 to 12 per cent, and among indigenous Fijians between the ages of 20 and 24 years, it was about 49 per cent. Economic policies aimed at solving the unemployment problem, facilitating growth and increasing revenues for a Fijian-controlled government (under severe pressure to meet the increased demands of Fijians for more and better services and benefits) required sustained private investment. The area of private investment that seemed to have the greatest long-term potential for growth was manufacturing, especially export manufacture. This was especially so given the improved and preferential access of Fiji manufactures offered by New Zealand, Australia and the European Economic Community. Said the World Bank in 1991: "Currently, the most serious constraint is the lack of investor confidence; a potentially more important limitation is that of human resources."[66]

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[62] The World Bank, **Fiji: Challenges...**, op. cit., p. 3.

[63] "Fiji's emigration still on the rise", **Fiji Times**, 13 April 1991, p. 3.

[64] The World Bank, **Fiji: Challenges...**, op. cit., p. 3.

[65] Ibid.

[66] The World Bank, **Fiji: Challenges...**, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

Fiji's economy has grown under the stimulus of active government involvement in the production process. Public sector employment in Fiji accounts for about one-third of all continuous employment; about two-thirds of all wage employment between 1976 and 1986 occurred in the public sector. However, the public sector - the preserve of indigenous Fijians - has been compelled to contract. Under the structural adjustment guidelines issued by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, emphasis is to be placed on private investment to guarantee economic recovery and growth. This economic doctrine demands that the state decrease its role in the economy through privatization, and decreasing and eliminating its manifold subsidies, restricting trade barriers such as tariffs, price supports, quotas, etc., and establishing a policy environment conducive to promoting a more competitive market economy.[67]

To counter the losses that accompanied the high rates of emigration, the government implemented a variety of policies which in many ways added fuel to the fire of inter-ethnic malaise. The constitution of 1990 prescribes that at least 50 per cent of all jobs in the public service be reserved for indigenous Fijians. This discriminatory policy did not necessarily injure other sectional interests since many Indians, Chinese and Europeans were employed in small businesses and agriculture. However, with the severe restrictions on government expenditures affecting the size of the public service, Fijian claims for jobs could only be denied at great risk to the ruling régime in an era of rabid ethnic chauvinism. In practice, in the post-coup period in the public service, more Fijians were employed and promoted than other groups. By July 1991, a pattern had emerged evidenced by official Public Service Commission data showing that only about 34 per cent (not the 40 per cent set forth in the constitution) of appointments were allocated to Indians, with 42 per cent of these acting appointments; only 38 per cent of all promotions were gained by Indians.[68]

To offset the pre-eminence of other ethnic groups in business, the Fijian-led government embarked upon a series of affirmative action measures to encourage Fijians to enter into the private sector.[69] Subsistence and communally oriented, and unfamiliar with competition in an economy based on private enterprise, Fijians were institutionally unprepared, after independence, to enter into the arena of business. To make a Fijian into a successful business person required more than just the supply of capital, accompanied with a modicum of training courses and even a degree in business administration. The collective values of the Fijian community, largely based on mutual sharing, remained the most stubborn bulwark against success in the individualist and acquisitive world of commerce. Even in the area of co-operatives Fijians have floundered, with communal demands taking priority over individual gain.[70]

Despite this, the current Fijian-run régime has embarked even more vigorously on lavish programmes to facilitate Fijian entry into the business world. Prospective and actual Fijian business persons have established the "Viti Chamber of Commerce." Furthermore, public funds have been allocated for three sets of programmes (evoking strident protests from non-Fijians). First, the Fijian Development Bank, a statutory body of the Government established to grant loans for development, announced that of a total of 62.8 million Fiji dollars available for loans between July 1991 and June 1992, 13.1 million could be exclusively set aside for

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[67] The World Bank, **Fiji: Challenges...**, op. cit., p. 10.

[68] "Only 34% of civil service appointees Indians", Sangharsh (Fiji), 3(7), p. 1.

[69] Special programmes aimed at enabling Fijians to establish private businesses were, of course, not new in Fiji. When Ratu Mara was Prime Minister, several schemes were initiated by the government but generally they failed to become anchored. To this day, no sizable group of independent Fijian entrepreneurs has emerged. There have been various reasons advanced to explain this problem, including a historical factor. See G. Chand, "Race and regionalism in Fiji, Pacific and India," **Economic and Political Weekly**, 20 January 1990, p. 168.

[70] See Ralph R. Premdas and Jeffrey S. Steeves, **Cooperatives and Development in Fiji**, Kabar Seebarang (forthcoming).

Fijians under special concessional terms.[71] Under the "Special Loan Scheme for Fijians," each prospective Fijian entrepreneur could obtain about 200,000 Fiji dollars at 5.5 per cent interest. Apart from this special scheme, Fijians also had access to the bank's normal lending schemes. Under its practices, and especially in the post-coup period when the Bank's board of directors was staffed exclusively with indigenous Fijians, the Fijian Development Bank emerged in the public consciousness as an indigenous Fijian bank where unlimited access was available for funds for all purposes.

While non-Fijians, especially Fiji Indians, decried the special loan programmes in part because of the very large losses the government suffered from business failures connected to loans given to Fijians, Ratu Mara (Prime Minister in the interim government) stoutly defended government policy. He argued that "for too long Fijians have been commercial outsiders with limited access to the real wealth of the country."[72] He felt that charges of discrimination against non-Fijians were "usually one sided reflecting the fears and concerns of only one community" and that in fact "many criticisms and protests seem to be oblivious to the discrimination which stares Fijians in the face every day."[73] Mara pointed out that charges that true Fijians neither liked nor wanted to be in business were untrue; he argued that on the contrary Fijians "want to compete in business and in other sectors of the community too but the system works against them."[74] He therefore defended "the government's policies aimed at rectifying all of this."[75]

The second government scheme to increase Fijians' presence in business was participation in the purchase of shares in companies. Through Fijian Holdings Ltd. (a holding company formed originally in 1984 by 14 Fijian provinces), the Fijian Affairs Board and the NLTB, an interest free loan of 20 million Fiji dollars was secured from the government to purchase shares in 10 private companies.[76] This holding company has earned substantial profits which in 1990 amounted to nearly 2 million Fiji dollars and paid a 10 per cent dividend. The company sought additional government loans and intended to expand the area of Fijian ownership in the private sector.

Finally, the government has accelerated its programme of allocating sums of money to secure a quota of scholarships and places at the University of the South Pacific and other training institutions. Because of the drain of (mainly Indian) Fiji-trained graduates (of the University and other institutions including the Fiji School of Medicine and the Fiji Institute of Technology), the government has felt justified in heavily tilting scholarships in favour of Fijians.

The economic cost of ethnic conflict has come back to haunt the coup makers. Massive economic dislocation has been partly concealed by the resurgence of tourism and even sugar production. The structural costs are, however, likely to persist as the conflict continues to smoulder. In the short run, it is unlikely that economic disparities between Fijians and Indians will be bridged. In this context, the basis of another round of discriminatory policies is being laid for ethnic outbidders to capitalize upon, as one tier of extremists is replaced by another in a downward spiral of unending destruction.

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[71] G. Chand, "Race and regionalism..." op cit., p.168. See also "$5 million loans for Fijiian businesses", **Fiji Times**, 19 September 1990.

[72] Cited in "Fijian ownership for Wonko, says Mara", **Fiji Times**, 16 January 1991, p. 2.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid. See also "Fijian Holdings invests", **Fiji Times**, 6 August 1991, p. 1.

The Socio-Cultural and Psychological Dimensions

A general tendency exists to evaluate a Third World country's well-being mainly on the basis of per capita GNP data. These indices reveal broad characteristics, but are too abstract and intangible. Behind the array of aggregate statistical data are people, their lives, how they survive, suffer, cope, fail, succeed, etc. Ultimately, development devolves on the well-being of the individual in society. Social well-being is the micro-dimension of development change; it orients and measures the impact and effects of political and economic structures and strategies on the welfare of the very subject of all development activities. Social development is multi-faceted, but in the last analysis, derived from economic, political, and cultural aggregate sources, it addresses holistically the dignity, welfare, and personal development of the human creature. This, however, is not always easy to specify without reference to the norms and customs of a society, for the cultural system defines the meaning of such critical categories of development as dignity; self-hood; material, spiritual and ethical values. Despite this, we cannot relativize the fundamental needs of the human person, tangling it in a thicket of ideological and cultural debate and jargon. We know at a minimum what is not acceptable: torture, starvation, domination, isolation, dependence, discrimination, etc.

A reasonable measure of predictability about one's continued safety and survival is essential and a pre-requisite to all of the remaining basic needs of life. In the wake of the military intervention in May 1987, widespread ethnic violence erupted in Fiji, concentrated mainly in the capital city, Suva, where masses of Fijians attacked Indians, their stores and their homes. The Fijians did not know the Indians who were the victims of their violence, but had a view inculcated from their youth that made the Indians their main adversaries in life. To Indians, Fijians were inferior and consequently held in contempt. Through the negative stereotyping built into their respective cultural upbringings, the lenses of collective antipathy were imparted to Fijians and Indians. It dehumanized each side, but equally significant it laid a body of pre-disposing prejudices which made every day in the mind of every Fijian and Indian an invitation to civil strife. To be sure, rituals of avoidance and minimal courtesy are everywhere evident in daily inter-communal interaction, but below the veneer of civility and indifference lurks the monster of collective ethnic suspicion and hate. In the privacy of homes and communities, Fijians and Indians openly utilize denigrating epithets to describe the behaviour of each other. It is a case of "we" versus "them" in an ongoing contest over territorial space, land, jobs, politics - just about everything.

After a system of popular representation was first introduced in Fiji, politics became the main arena of inter-ethnic rivalry. Fijians asserted their claim to paramountcy in their own land; Indians countered with a demand for equality. On the anvil of protracted ethnic conflict over time emerged a total engagement involving practically all Fijians and Indians. In the tightening vice of the contest between the two major ethnicized parties that came to represent Fijians and Indians, a rigid sectionally compartmentalized society evolved, breeding a spiral of tensions that periodically erupted into violence.[77] Like most ethnically segmented states, Fiji is perpetually at war with itself. Surrogates for physical violence suffuse the system. These encompass such forms as rivalry in the celebration of their respective religious holidays, competition in business and government, etc. Stereotypes belittle and separate entire communities serving as a sort of quiet victory of the mind over the opponent. They tend to dehumanize ethnic enemies and set the stage for violence against the collective opponent. When ethnically based parties emerged, these underlying stereotypical antipathies were harnessed into instruments of mass action. The parties accentuated inter-communal hostilities. Competition at elections provided the occasion for these antagonisms to be vented openly; often political campaigns seemed like military engagements. All of this brought the society

[77] See R.S. Milne, "The Pacific way...", op. cit., p. 420. See also **Pacific Review**, 7 September 1972 and Ralph R. Premdas, "Ethnic conflict management: Fiji," in B. Lal (ed.), **Politics in Fiji**, Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1986, pp.107-138.

periodically to the brink of mass violence.[78] While they shared a consensus that collective communal policies and rivalry were divisive, wasteful, and prone to instability and violence, sectional leaders have not hesitated to use the inflammatory materials of inter-ethnic stereotyping to campaign for votes.[79] Playing with ethnic fire that threatened the entire house which both communal groups became a mode of conducting political life.[80] It is a game of deadly self-deception and hypocrisy.

In the vice of tightening ethnic tensions, often experienced at election time, the bounds of tolerance are broken by quiet talk of communal violence including the prospects of genocide. Fijian extremists such as Sakiasi Butadroka who spoke of eliminating Indians through mass eviction from Fiji merely express a variant of outright liquidation. Talk of collective inter-communal violence is pervasive in Fiji. From time to time, such talk has become intensely threatening. Butadroka often wears a red tie as a symbol of the bloodshed that must follow should Indians not leave Fiji. In 1977, he was convicted and jailed for using racially inflammatory language in public. Indians have reacted by migrating and discriminating against Fijians at every opportunity. In shops and stores, courtesy and credit extended to Fijians fluctuates with the state of ethnic relations. The war is conducted in underlying idioms that are understood well by all. When Fijians attacked Indians in May 1987, it was merely a more overt and physical expression of another war that has been conducted in many millions of ways every day, everywhere, for a long time in Fiji.

The garrison state that the 1990 constitution has created is manifested in a "new reality" that violates the rights and well-being of all citizens. The establishment of the Fijian Intelligence Service, with unrestricted license to burgle, open private mail, eavesdrop, etc., can be used against all opponents of the régime, Fijian and Indian alike. Like in other places with similar conflicts such as Guyana, repression at first directed against one communal section and applauded by the other soon spreads to engulf all citizens who are critical of those who wield power. Fear of expressing open criticisms pervades post-coup Fiji. This fear constrains the freedom of expression of all citizens, regardless of ethnic origins. The constitution forbids criticisms of Fijian chiefs, a fact that binds both Fijians and Indians. The widespread use of Fijian civilians to report on the behaviour of Indians after the coups has established a form of terror that extends to all citizens who dare to oppose the ruling régime.

The costs of the universalization of fear and terror of a régime that lacks legitimacy and is upheld by indirect coercion are likely to be resistance, non-cooperation, and sabotage, which in turn cause the ruling régime to expand its security system and divert resources from development to the maintenance of order. Communal violence is an especially virulent form of irrational behaviour that can rarely be restrained once civil war breaks out. In Fiji, the persistence of inequality, discrimination and repression provides the incendiary raw materials for protracted country-wide struggle. In time, external actors with money and arms join the fray, expanding the scope of the struggle, intensifying its effects, and rendering reconciliation and conflict resolution more complex and intransigent.[81] With large numbers of Fiji Indians living in concentrated overseas enclaves, many of them having lost their careers and properties, the internal ethnic violence in Fiji is bound to breed unending plots with outside conspirators to destabilize the Fiji government. There have already been one attempted hijacking of an aircraft in Fiji, an attempted shipment of arms into Fiji, and several plots to overthrow the government. More such activities are likely to be spawned, compelling the ruling régime to resort to more intense levels of repression, breeding similar responses in kind, in a spiral of unending irrational waste.

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[78] See "Ratu Mara speaks on government of national unity", **Fiji Times**, 2 September 1980, p. 1.

[79] Ralph Premdas, "Towards of government of national unity," **Pacific Perspective**, 10, 1982, pp. 1-21.

[80] Ibid.

[81] See Ralph R. Premdas, "The Internationalisation of ethnic conflict: Theoretical perspectives," in Ron May and K.M. de Silva (eds.), **The Internationalisation of Ethnic Conflict**, London: Pinter, 1990.

The polarization of ethnic politics pervades all aspects of life and all issues, leading to cultural intolerance between Fijians and Indians. Fijians regard Indians as "heathens," "unchristian," and "idol worshippers." Indians similarly depreciate Fijian culture, regarding it as inferior to Indian culture. The rich heritage of each cultural section is not enjoyed for their mutual enrichment but has become part of the artillery of confrontation between the sections. Generally, Fijians and Indians do not speak each other's languages, even though in some parts of Fiji many do so. English is the lingua franca. A powerful cultural veil separates the Fijian from the Indian in the areas of religion, language, and values. Few cross-cultural norms that are sufficiently strong have evolved to offer common ground for political discourse. The main medium of communication is blind collective antagonism, often expressed in intransigent claims and counter-claims. The cultural barriers that have evolved render inter-ethnic Fijian-Indian marriages and liaisons infrequent and rare. In a real sense, cultures have become incubators of inter-ethnic intolerance, fostering prejudices and preparing the ground of inter-sectional antipathy and outright violence. Cultural practices in an ethnically segmented state at war with itself have led to the social compartmentalization of individual lives and to personal isolation and distorted identity formation.

In its most general sense, participation refers to membership of a person in all aspects of society. It attests to the idea that the human personality is formed relationally in the ways of social interaction which mould the mind and confer value on existence. Participation, then, is not just about political rights to vote and involvement in collective decision-making, but is also about social self-definition and community identity in a wholesome system of relations that does not distort human dignity At the level of voluntary associations, a de facto uni-ethnic membership persists in Fiji. A collective spirit constrains membership only to certain uni-ethnic associations and penalizes persons who dare to join groups that are cross-communal. The personal autonomy essential to individual development is lost. Old cross-cultural networks and friends have eroded. It would seem that a new form of social pathology has set in. In Fiji, if development includes liberation and freedom to grow in healthy relationship to others, then ethnic conflict hampers if not eliminates this avenue of personal growth. In effect, in the tightening claims of group loyalty, social participation of a particular pathological type becomes prominent, and extremist and militant behaviour aimed at belittling the ethnic enemy is rewarded.

In sum, especially after the seizure of power by an ethnically-based party in Fiji and the ensuing implementation of a régime of ethnically-oriented discrimination and repression, the persistence of inter-ethnic malaise has severely constrained cross-cultural interaction and participation as a legitimate form of social behaviour. The new government system has created a new political hierarchy in inter-ethnic relations. It has marginalized one communal section without meaningfully benefiting the other in Fiji's bipolar state. The thorough nature of the oppression destroys the freedom to choose one's friends, creates powerless people in all ethnic sections, and encourages invidious forms of inter-ethnic rivalry that distort the friendship and love that people are capable of. It places a premium on hate and dehumanized inter-communal perception in communications. Future generations of Fiji citizens are nurtured in this environment.