

# **History of Inter-Group Conflict and Violence in Modern Fiji**

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## **Abstract**

The thesis analyses inter-group conflict in Fiji within the framework of inter-group theory, popularised by Gordon Allport, who argued that inter-group conflict arises out of inter-group prejudice, which is historically constructed and sustained by dominant groups. Furthermore, Allport hypothesised that there are three attributes of violence: structural and institutional violence in the form of discrimination, organised violence and extropunitive violence in the form of in-group solidarity. Using history as a method, I analyse the history of inter-group conflict in Fiji from 1960 to 2006. I argue that inter-group conflict in Fiji led to the institutionalisation of discrimination against Indo-Fijians in 1987 and this escalated into organised violence in 2000. Inter-group tensions peaked in Fiji during the 2006 general elections as ethnic groups rallied behind their own communal constituencies as a show of in-group solidarity and produced an electoral outcome that made multiparty governance stipulated by the multiracial 1997 Constitution impossible. Using Allport's recommendations on mitigating inter-group conflict in divided communities, the thesis proposes a three-pronged approach to inter-group conciliation in Fiji, based on implementing national identity, truth and reconciliation and legislative reforms.

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### ABBREVIATIONS

FLP-Fiji Labour Party  
SDL- Soqosoqo ni Duavata ni Lewenivanua Party  
NFP-National Federation Party  
GVP- General Voters Party  
NLUP-New Labour Unity party  
CAMV-Conservative Alliance Matanitu Vanua Party  
POT-Party of Truth  
PANU-Party of National Unity  
GHP-Girmit Heritage Party  
FNP-Fijian Nationalist Party  
NVTLP-Nationalist Vanua Tako Lavo Party  
UPP-United Peoples' Party  
AIM-Justice and Freedom Party  
NAPF-National Alliance Party of Fiji  
SLMP-Social Liberal Multicultural Party  
ANC-All National Congress  
FAP-Fijian Association Party  
BKV-Ba Kei Viti Party  
GCC-Great Council of Chiefs  
Charter-Peoples' Charter for Change, Peace and Progress 2008

## Chapter 1: Setting the Scene

### 1.1 Introduction

Fiji has an established history of inter-group conflict and violence. The post-independence constitutional settlement brokered by the colonial authorities in 1970 collapsed under the weight of inter-group and intra-group tensions in May 1987 when an Indo-Fijian dominated government with multi-ethnic orientation was overthrown by an Indigenous nationalist military, which removed Indo-Fijians<sup>1</sup> from positions of authority, imposed restrictions on future political processes and implemented a racially slanted 1990 Constitution. As a result of the coups of 1987, discrimination against Indo-Fijians was institutionalised from 1987 to 1997 as Indigenous Fijian<sup>2</sup> nationalists became politically assertive and refused to accept the multiethnic constitutional order and the inclusion of Indo-Fijians in the national government, mandated by the 1997 Constitution. Following a third Indigenous nationalist coup in 2000, there was widespread violence against Indo-Fijians and as a consequence Indo-Fijians became inward focused as the Indigenous government that came to power in 2001 re-introduced discrimination against the community and attempted to pardon the conspirators of the 2000 coup. The division between Fiji's two communities peaked during the 2006 general election, and the military that previously supported the Indigenous nationalists in 1987 challenged the ethno-

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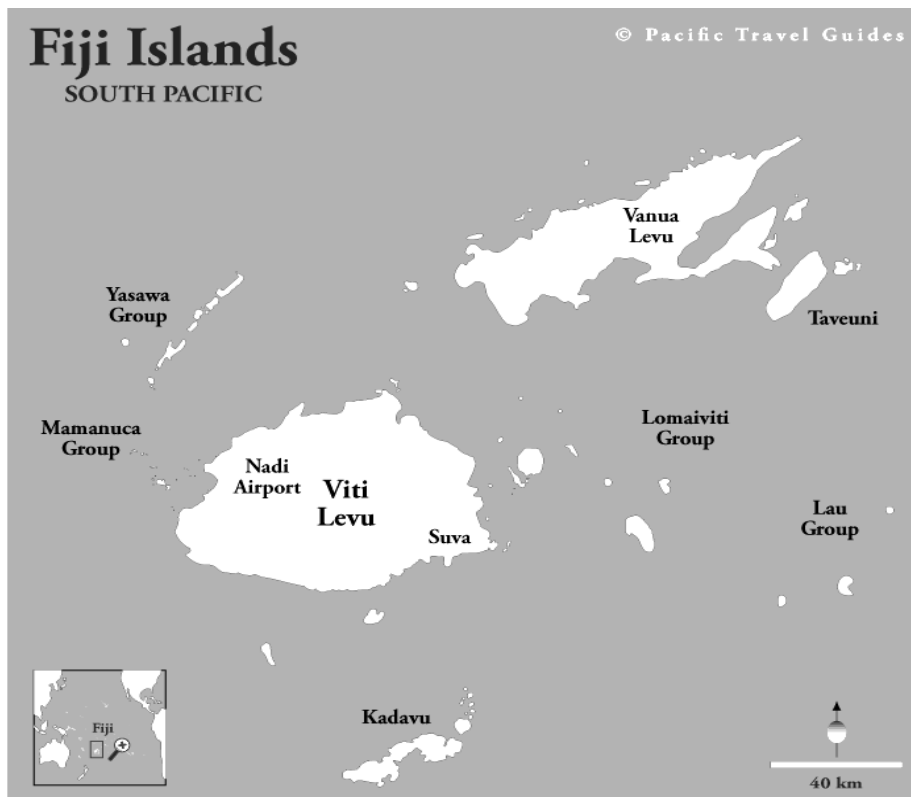
<sup>1</sup> The descendants of Indian indentured workers brought to Fiji from 1879 to 1920 are referred throughout this thesis as Indo-Fijians. Indo-Fijians, instead of Indians, is used in this thesis to locate Fijians of Indian origin in Fiji's history.

<sup>2</sup> The first people of Fiji are referred throughout this thesis as Indigenous Fijians which includes the first people of the Island of Rotuma. The term 'Indigenous Fijians' is used in this thesis instead of Fijian to locate the Indigenous peoples' in Fiji's history.

nationalist policies of the Indigenous government and executed Fiji's fourth military coup in December 2006.

Geographically, Fiji consists of 18,376 square kilometres of land and includes about 330 islands, of which about 100 are inhabited. There two main islands of Fiji, Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, are illustrated in Figure 1 below. The largest island and population centre is Viti Levu, which has an area of 10,388 square kilometres, and Vanua Levu, located northeast of Viti Levu, is the second largest island and is slightly more than half the size of Viti Levu (Mataki, Koshi & Lal 2006: 50).

**Figure 1: Map of the Fiji Islands**



(Source: Pacific Travel Guide website: <http://www.fiji.maps-pacific.com/>)



The population by ethnicity in Table 1 shows the distribution of the population in Fiji between 1966 and 2007, the historical period covered in this thesis. The 1996 Census records a decline in the Indo-Fijian population in comparison to the total population by 5 per cent due to the impact of the 1987 military coups. The 2007 Census data demonstrates that the Indo-Fijian population was reduced further compared with the 1996 Census by a margin of 7 per cent, following violence against the community in the aftermath of the 2000 coup.

**Table 1: Population of Fiji by Ethnicity-1966-2007**

| <b>Population of Fiji by Ethnicity (1966-2007)</b> |                   |             |        |             |   |                                   |
|--|-------------------|-------------|--------|-------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Census Year  | Indigenous Fijian | Indo-Fijian | Others | Total (Pop) | Indigenous Fijians (% of the Total Pop) | Indo-Fijians (% of the Total Pop) |
| 1966   | 202,176           | 240,960     | 33,591 | 476,727     | 42%                                     | 51%                               |
| 1976   | 259,932           | 292,896     | 35,240 | 588,068     | 44%                                     | 50%                               |
| 1986   | 329,305           | 348,704     | 37,366 | 715,375     | 46%                                     | 49%                               |
| 1996   | 393,575           | 338,818     | 42,684 | 775,077     | 51%                                     | 44%                               |
| 2007   | 475,739           | 313,798     | 47,734 | 837,271     | 57%                                     | 37%                               |

(Source: Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics website:  
[http://www.statsfiji.gov.fj/Census2007/census07\\_index2.htm](http://www.statsfiji.gov.fj/Census2007/census07_index2.htm))

This thesis sets out the framework for analysing inter-group conflict in Fiji by utilising inter-group theory as its methodological paradigm. Researching inter-group conflict in divided communities is challenging and complex because of overlapping cross-cultural dimensions. However, this complexity is addressed by adopting an analytical historical approach designed to:

- (i) provide meaningful context to the inter-group conflict in Fiji;
- (ii) promote analysis and insights across different historical intervals; and
- (iii) propose solutions that will enable inter-group cooperation and harmony.

This thesis maps the inter-group conflict in Fiji since 1987. The theoretical framework used in this thesis is based on the seminal 1954 work of Gordon Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, who identified, through his research on post-war United States that conflict between groups is caused by prejudice which is historically constructed and has multiple behavioural levels including discrimination, organised violence and in-group solidarity. After, dissecting the nature of prejudice, Allport provides recommendations for inter-group cooperation and harmony.

This thesis examines Allport's theory and develops a methodology to elucidate historical moments to explore inter-group conflict in Fiji. This includes, a comprehensive review of existing literature on Fiji and setting the context by providing a story of Fiji from 1960 to 2006, a period within which the country had three coups, and where Indigenous Fijian nationalists instituted discriminatory policies and organised physical attacks against Indo-Fijians (Trmka 2008b). By 2006, respective communal groups rallied behind their own ethnic political parties in a show of in-group solidarity resulting in a divisive general election.

Following the historical setting, I will utilise Allport's recommendations and argue that a three-pronged approach, based on national identity, truth and reconciliation and legislative reforms, are required to build inter-group cooperation in Fiji.

## 1.2 Methodology

Inter-group conflict in divided communities is a complex issue (Huddy 2004: 947-67). It is complex because there are underlying prejudices including inclinations of ethnic groups to form generalisations and oversimplify the world of out-groups. After World War II, researchers in the United States, influenced by the growing civil rights movement, started looking at the sociology of race (Allport 1954). One such researcher Gordon Allport (1954) identified four conditions for a successful inter-group contact. Firstly, he argued that all social groups, regardless of their size, should have equal status; secondly, there has to be social enablers, such as a common identity, that promote inter-group cooperation; thirdly, inter-group cooperation can only come about if there are shared goals and values; and fourthly, the whole structure of inter-group collaboration has to be assisted by an agreed authority.

One of the most important acknowledgements of Allport is that prejudice in society is historically constructed and “only a total background of a conflict can lead to its understanding” (Allport 1954: 208). Prejudice for Allport is “an averted or hostile attitude towards a person who belongs to a group and is therefore presumed to have the objectionable qualities ascribed to the group” (Allport 1954: 7). According to Allport, inter-group conflict is characterised by the actions and omissions of powerful social and economic groups. These include avoidance, discrimination, physical attack and in-group solidarity (1954: 14-15). Avoidance for Allport is the least damaging expression of prejudice, however, discrimination is a more structured form of prejudice to deny out-

group equality thus “discrimination comes about when a dominant group deny to individuals or groups of people equality of treatment” (1954: 51). Allport’s four stages of prejudice manifest as distinct escalation points in history as he identifies discrimination as a pre-condition for violence. Besides equality, discrimination entails long periods of categorical prejudgment where suspicion and blaming of out-groups become firmly rooted in society (1954: 58). The next stage following discrimination is inter-group violence. Allport makes historical reference to the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany and the white supremacist Ku Klux Klan movement in the Southern United States (1954: 58), and argues that extreme nationalism (1954: 416) leads to direct and indirect violence against the out-group. The ideological positioning of the dominant group to push out the out-group from the community and the country is conceptualised as extropunitive violence (1954: 160). Allport theorised that extropunitive violence was characterised by obsessive concern and suspicion of the out-group, strengthening of in-group ties and increased prejudice against the out-group. Intropunitive violence, distinct from extropunitive violence, entailed aggression by members of the in-group against their own group (1954: 160). According to Allport, extropunitive and intropunitive characteristics operate in both the dominant group as well as the out-group, depending on the historical context.

Allport defines inter-group differences based on types and degrees of differences and differences based on abilities and cultural practices and beliefs. Moreover, he acknowledges that the most prominent difference that is emphasised by the current social sciences is that of racial and ethnic (1954: 107). Allport argued that there are ways in

which inter-group relations can be strengthened and these include strengthening legislative provisions that foster inter-group cooperation, formal education methods, acquaintance and contact programs, group retaining methods and individual or group therapy (1954: 480). Besides, Allport believed that national character or national identity is important to cement inter-group relations (1954: 97-116).

Allport's inter-group theory, in particular his analysis of inter-group discrimination, violence and in-group solidarity as a form of extropunitive violence can be utilised to develop an analytical framework for the study of the history of the inter-group conflict in Fiji. As a result, it is proposed in the thesis that Allport's inter-group theory allows for the:

- critical investigation of the history of inter-group conflict in modern Fiji;
- application of inter-group theory in Fiji, in particular the role of discrimination, violence and extropunitive in-group solidarity in crystallising inter-group discourse; and
- proposals for inter-group conflict resolution in Fiji by utilising Allport's recommendations on national identity, truth and reconciliation and legislative reforms in the form of multiparty legislative committees.

To tackle the themes of inter-group conflict in divided communities, academia must develop a more effective inter-group theory. The historical approach can offer a starting point here but the key task will be the formulation of an adequate comparative historiography of inter-group conflict, and the development of a deeper understanding of

the micro and macro linkages that shape inter-group discourse. More importantly, Allport's inter-group theory does not recognise the pervasiveness of racial politics in contemporary society (Winant 2000: 169-189) including the fluidity of cultural identity, social inequality and inter-group psychology on inter-group discourse. These limitations of the application of inter-group theory are acknowledged from the outset.

Besides limitations of inter-group theory, Thomas Pettigrew and Linda Tropp (2006: 753) have criticised Allport's inter-group theory and, following an extensive study of inter-group behaviour in conflict settings, argued that his conditions were not essential for prejudice reduction. As a result, they recommended that further research in this field should focus on negative factors that prevent inter-group contact from diminishing prejudice as well as the development of a more comprehensive theory of inter-group contact.

### **1.3 The Research Questions**

Allport's theory and its potential application to Fiji form the basis for two essential claims:

- (i) the history of inter-group conflict in modern Fiji, in particular the role of discrimination, violence and in-group solidarity acts as historical moments and;
- (ii) inter-group theory can be applied to analyse inter-group conflict and foreshadow its resolution.

In Fiji, inter-group conflict is characterised as a struggle between Indo-Fijian moves for political equality and Indigenous nationalists' moves to cement a permanent Indigenous political paramountcy (Kurer 2001: 302). This inter-group conflict has taken various forms throughout colonial and post-colonial periods (Lal 2006), but for the purpose of this thesis, the approach will be to focus on the history of inter-group conflict by examining in detail the coups of 1987 and 2000 and the racially divisive elections of 2006. The historical approach is essential to Allport's theoretical framework and indeed to inform this analysis via his main recommendations for building consensus and cooperation among contesting groups.

#### **1.4 The Thesis Structure**

The thesis structure has three parts: Part 1: Introduction, Part 2: History of Inter-group Conflict in Fiji and Part 3: Application of Inter-group Theory in Fiji.

In the introduction, I highlight the rationale for history as a method in the application of Allport's theory to inter-group conflict in Fiji. Fiji has a history of contested identities and inter-group conflict forms the central theme of this thesis; that inter-group conflict in Fiji is located in history and as such only through historical analysis of the Fiji coups of 1987, 2000 and the general election of 2006, can we fully appreciate the Fiji context.

Why this period is taken into account is that following the coups of 1987, structural and institutional violence against Indo-Fijians in the form of discrimination was institutionalised leading to organised violence and fear of violence in 2000 which in turn

triggered in-group solidarity and extropunitive violence, all key aspects of Allport's theory.

In Chapter 2, I conduct a review of the literature on inter-group conflict in Fiji. I focus on the three dominant types of approaches to research on Fiji namely discourse analysis, ethnography, and critical theory and argue why historiography will assist in locating inter-group conflict in Fiji. I emphasise that an historical approach fills the void in the literature of inter-group theory and more importantly allows us to examine the manifestation of prejudice in the Fiji context.

Part 2 details the history of Fiji, in particular the history of inter-group conflict from 1960 to 1987, the 1987 coups, the 2000 coup and extropunitive in-group solidarity between Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijians. In Chapter 3, I provide a history of Fiji from 1960 to 1987 as a background to Chapter 4 where I look at the history of the coups of 1987 by utilising the work of published scholars and draw upon information used in the mainstream Fiji press. In Chapter 5, the history of the 2000 coup is narrated through mostly popular press, and information from fieldwork conducted in December of 2000 on Indo-Fijians, who fled Indigenous nationalist violence in rural areas of Fiji. A sample of three cases of violence against Indo-Fijians is used to highlight the plight of the community living in rural Fiji. In Chapter 6, I utilise both the scholarly literature and press reports to examine the history of the 2006 general elections, where Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijians rallied behind their own communal constituencies to produce an ethnically polarised electoral outcome. The ethnic division highlighted the failure of the



multiracial constitution and the electoral strategies adopted in 1997 to bring about inter-ethnic moderation and accommodation.

In Part 3 of the thesis, Allport's inter-group theory on structural and institutional violence in the form of discrimination, fear of violence and physical violence and extropunitive violence in the form of ideological positioning of the dominant group against the out-group provides for the reinterpretation of Fiji history. Following the 1987 military coup, overt discrimination was instituted against Indo-Fijians after Indo-Fijian members of the coalition government were removed from office at gun point by an Indigenous military, and senior Indo-Fijian public servants, including magistrates and judges were summarily dismissed. The history of the 1987 coup discussed in Chapter 4 provides the context for the analysis of institutional and structural violence in Chapter 7 where I utilise Allport's theory on discrimination to examine why discrimination against Indo-Fijian was implemented and later constitutionalised via the 1990 Constitution. While discrimination against Indo-Fijians featured prominently in the 1987 coups, organised violence against the community, particularly in rural Fiji, by Indigenous nationalists became the central focus in 2000. In Chapter 7, I use Allport's theory on inter-group violence to analyse such organised violence against Indo-Fijians.

Despite the new multiracial constitution in 1997, discrimination and violence against Indo-Fijians led to in-group solidarity and extropunitive violence as ethnic groups became inward focused. Besides Indo-Fijians, Indigenous Fijian nationalists also emphasised in-group solidarity and established ideological justifications for pushing the

Indo-Fijians out of the country. Many in the Indigenous community saw the affirmative action programs of the Indigenous nationalist government of Laisenia Qarase as a mechanism for bridging economic disparity between Indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians. Using Allport as a theoretical reference, both Fiji communities' in-group perspectives as well as extropunitive and intropunitive violence are analysed in Chapter 7. Not only analytics using Allport allows us to reinterpret Fiji's inter-group conflict but also enables us to consider approaches for inter-group conflict resolution. In Chapter 8, Allport's recommendations, based on national identity, reconciliation and legislative reforms are projected on to the inter-group conflict situation in Fiji in order to foreshadow inter-group cooperation and harmony.

The thesis concludes by emphasising that in the past there was increasing emphasis on the nature of inter-group conflict in Fiji but there was an inherent lack of a theoretical model that provided a framework for historical convergence in divided communities. Allport's inter-group theory fills this gap by emphasising constructive strategies for inter-group engagement through national identity, national therapy via truth and reconciliation and the use of legislative instrument, in the form of parliamentary committees. While Allport provides a comprehensive theoretical foundation for the study of inter-group conflict in Fiji, further research should be carried out on contrasting theoretical approaches to inter-group relations. According to Leonie Huddy (2004), the strengths and weaknesses of social dominance, social identity and system justification theories are required to be fleshed out in detail in order to leverage new and exciting approaches to the study of inter-group conflict.

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical Claims**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Ethnic conflict in Fiji has been a subject of academic inquiry including discourse analysis, ethnography, and critical theory. These approaches have been utilised to examine underlying social and political forces that inform inter-group tensions in Fiji. In this chapter, I will examine major themes of interpretation of modern Fiji and suggest a new historical epistemology, using inter-group theory (Allport 1954). I argue, that besides an examination of the past, history can be utilised as an epistemological tool for refocusing the issues on national identity, truth and reconciliation and the power of multiparty parliamentary arrangements. Previous academic research regarding Fiji has not utilised inter-group theory as an analytical lens through which to refocus historical context. In this regard, my approach and analysis fills an important gap in the inquiry of inter-group conflict in Fiji.

### **2.2 Discourse Analysis**

Nelson Kasfir (1979:365-366) has argued, within the discourse analysis framework, that ethnic identities are both fluid and intermittent in developing multiethnic communities. Using the case study of Uganda, he argued that “when political participation is based on ethnicity, individuals are necessarily constrained (though to a greater or lesser degree) by those objective indicators of common ancestry thought to be especially salient-culture,

myths, language, or territory” Kasfir (1979: 371). Kasfir continued that shared perception creates social solidarity and turns “individuals assigned to an ethnic category to an active ethnic group”. Kasfir (1979: 371) further noted that the British colonial rule created multiple ethnic identities, which according to Carmen White (2002: 14) are either “ranked or unranked”.

White (2002: 14) argues that “while in ranked societies, social conventions prescribe difference in subordinate groups concomitant with the pejorative assessment of their very worth, ethnic relations in an unranked system are marked by mutual ambivalence, with negative perceptions balanced by begrudging allowances for other group’s competence in a given sector”. In her case study of Fiji, White highlighted that colonial policies structured conflicting political and economic interests for Indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians, while colonial ideologies about the “nature” of groups have survived in the form of invidious comparisons.

The impact of colonial rule in establishing ethnic compartments and grooming the Indigenous elite in Fiji is often under-emphasised in the study of post-colonial Fiji politics. Benjamin Reilly (2004: 486) noted that colonial rule had diverse impacts in the South Pacific Islands, where “post-colonial state-building led to the growth of new cleavages which served to restructure politics along a more confrontational axis”. Martha Kaplan who approached inter-ethnic conflict as a study in contending discourse argued that in Fiji, the colonial encounter led Indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians to “construct each other in terms of their own, quite different cultural systems” (Kaplan 1989: 350).

The British colonial rule, according to Kaplan, consciously divided the communities along ethnic and cultural lines and continuously intervened to circumvent cross-cultural collaboration. However, Robert Norton (2002: 154) disputes this claim and suggests that the argument that Britain willingly perpetuated ethnic division is not supported, because there were instances, especially during the move towards independence, to provide a framework for leaders of both communities to work together. Nevertheless, Norton (1993: 741-759) acknowledges that discourse about the importance of tradition has been a central feature of Indigenous Fijian participation in national politics, including the celebration of tradition figures prominently in the way ordinary people contrast the Indigenous Fijian way of life to lives of immigrants.

Ralph Premdas (2002: 26), in his analysis of the promise of the 1997 Constitution, observed that Fiji's problems stem from "Fiji's unintegrated multiethnic structure and history of inter-sectional conflict", which reflects a more broad-reaching concern of managing diversity in multiethnic settings through institutions, policies and practices. Premdas (2002: 34) concludes that "while the Fiji case suggests the need for consensus political systems of power-sharing requiring special kinds of institutional arrangements which deviate from standard Western zero-sum adversarial parliamentary models", there are limitations to this approach due to existing ethnic divisions.

Anthropologist Margaret Jolly utilises discourse analysis to approach ethnicity in Fiji as a fluid identifiable response to context and transformation. According to Jolly (2005: 423), the native and migrant distinction is more compelling for Fiji where "the white settlers

were never a majority and where difference between native Fijian and migrant Indo-Fijian is still seen by many Indigenous Fijians in the country as a relation between guest and host” whereas Sind Emde (2005) analysed the Fiji 2000 crisis as an emotional discourse, examining fears and anxieties that influenced inter-ethnic relations in Fiji since the arrival of Indian indentured workers in 1879. Emde concluded that a “dialectical relationship existed between rumours and fear during the political instability of 2000 which was emotionally embodied and used to nourish ethnic antagonism and politicise ethnicity” (Emde 2005: 398). While discourse analysts focused on difference, identities and ethnicity in Fiji, Fiji ethnographers examined similar themes in different social contexts.

### **2.3 Ethnography**

Ethnographic research is concerned with how social realities are constructed. It ventures into an area of cultural studies that allows the researcher to analyse the actions of communities and place them into a formal context. Paul Atkinson and Martyn Hammersley (2007: 3-14) explained that ethnographers source data from a range of sources, focus on a few cases and “interpret the meanings, functions and consequences of human actions and show how these are implicated in local, and perhaps into wider contexts”. The authors conclude that ethnographic research should not only be concerned with understanding the complexities of the cultural environment but also applying the findings to initiate change.

Ethnographic studies of Indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians have played a significant role in providing the conceptual framework for greater insights into ethnic categories and practices, symbols, perceptions and beliefs in Fiji. Influenced largely by anthropology, Hirokazu Miyazaki (2004: 6-7) investigated the “character of hope across different forms of knowing in Indigenous Fijian philosophy and anthropological points of replication, and presented a modality of ethnographic engagement predicated on reception and response”. Miyazaki conducted detailed ethnographic research on the Indigenous community of Suvavou, located near the capital of Fiji Suva and started his research by asking a question about how the people of Suvavou kept “their hope alive generation after generation when the knowledge has continued to fail them” (Miyazaki 2004:3). In order to answer this question, his book *The Method of Hope: Anthropology, Philosophy and Fijian Knowledge* investigated the concept of hope across the different generation of the Suvavou people ranging from archival research to gift giving, Christian Church rituals, and business practices. The ethnographic study by Miyazaki is not only important in understanding the contours of hope but the larger socio-political context of the struggle such as compensation for the use of ancestral land by the government of Fiji. Some of these concerns were highlighted by George Speight during the insurrection of May 2000 and many in the village supported the nationalist call to return all ancestral land to the Indigenous owners.

Kevin Miller (2008) for his doctoral thesis conducted an ethnographic account of Indo-Fijian ethnomusicology and analysed three layers of ethnic intercourse: the sub-ethnic in which the Indo-Fijian community negotiates internal difference, the national based on

social and political relations between Indo-Fijian and the Indigenous Fijian and the transnational in which global diasporic movements engender new points of attachment to the concept of community. Miller discovered that Indo-Fijians have drawn boundaries for their community through songs and through cultural performance and utilise them to negotiate the constitution of their community (Miller 2008: 430). An important observation of Miller was his analysis of mixed group performance, by Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijians for international visitors, commissioned by the Fiji government before the 2006 coup. Miller notes that the nationalist government was of the opinion that cross-cultural understanding was not achieved through this initiative. However, Indo-Fijians were of a view that the performance “transcended the requisite correlation between the performer’s ethnicity and the ethnicity represented” (Miller 2008: 432). Miller concluded that the productivity of mixed-group performance was limited due to the small number of such singers and their “marginal space in the national imaginary” (Miller 2008: 433).

One of the causes of this marginal national space for inter-group discourse is Indigenous nationalism, which continues to play a dominant role in shaping inter-group relations in post-colonial Fiji and strong distinctions are made between Indigenous groups and migrants based on contested cultural values and heterogeneous Indigenous Fijian strategies of “de-legitimising non-Indigenous elements” (Cretton 2005: 415), including parliamentary democracy, constitutional rules, and human rights. Vivian Cretton through her ethnographic study of Indigenous Fijian nationalism notes that Indigenous cultural strategies are “located in the continuity of the past in the present, consolidating cultural identities to various degrees, depending on the situation of the parties concerned”



(Cretton 2005: 415). Culture, therefore, has been exposed as a political tool for the unification of the Indigenous Fijian society against the immigrant and less secure Indo-Fijians.

An important ethnography on violence against Indo-Fijians in Fiji, following the 2000 coup, is compiled by Susanna Trnka (2005: 354-67). Trnka used the concept of 'empirical citizenship' to explore how Indo-Fijians articulate and live out their place in a nation. Drawing on the ethnographic fieldwork she conducted in Fiji from 1999 to 2000, Trnka examined physical violence and the fear of violence among Indo-Fijians. Following the 19 May 2000 coup, a national campaign of violence against Indo-Fijians was orchestrated by the supporters of George Speight throughout Fiji. According to Trnka (2008a: 145), "Speight, unabashedly, made race the centrepiece of his revolutionary rhetoric, attempting to inspire Fiji's Indigenous Fijians to stand up for their rights and support what he called the cause". Despite the uncertainty facing Indo-Fijians during the height of the 2000 coup, Trnka observed that while the "atmosphere following the coup was one of fear and confusion, there were moments of overwhelming hilarity" (Trnka: 2008b:79). Utilising the theoretical framework of Gordon Allport and Leo Postman (1947), Trnka developed a conceptual framework around jokes and rumours:

Jokes suggested a limit to the chaos. While fantastical rumours acted to expand the possibilities of violence into the realm of the bizarre, jokes indicated that some things were not to be taken seriously but could indeed still be laughed at. By purposefully playing with people's credulity, jokes enabled individuals to point out the absurdity of what was already occurring and to assert that there were still things that were indeed

incredulous. In times of acute uncertainty, the production of humour thus imparted to those who partook in it a sense of orderliness and “normality” that was otherwise in question (Trnka 2008b: 80).

How Speight was able to stir Indigenous Fijian passion could be understood by the recent ethnography on Indigenous Fijians in the book *Our Wealth Is Loving Each Other* by Karen Brison (2007) who observed that Indigenous Fijians express pride in their culture and this makes them feel equal to others, including Indo-Fijians. However, in 2000, George Speight was able to project the view that Indo-Fijians were more “equal” and as a result was able to instil fear of dispossession among Indigenous Fijians by playing with their emotions. The works of Trnka, Brison and Miyazaki create a trajectory of fear, pride and hope that has added value to the study of both contemporary Indo-Fijian and Indigenous Fijian ethnographies. A more political account lies in critical theoretical studies of Fiji.

## **2.4 Critical Theory**

A common theme running across a number of critical theorist political commentators on Fiji is that a lack of inter-group contact has played a significant role in amplifying ethnic conflict, especially competition for political power. Moreover, the study of influences of military and ethno-nationalists on state power (Ratuva 2007), history of ethnic tensions and conflict (Lal 1988, 1992a, 2006, 2008), Indigenous nationalism (Lawson 1991, 2004), moments in Fiji’s political history (Fraenkel & Firth 2007), cycle of ethnic conflict (Field, Baba & Nabobo-Baba 2005), the role of Indigenous ruling class in

political formations (Halapua 2003) and post-colonial orthodoxy (Durutalo 1998, Robertson 2008) is located in the annals of critical theory.

Stephanie Lawson's research focused on the complexities of ethnicity, nationalism, and democracy, combining comparative and normative approaches to the study of Fiji politics. Her book *Failure of Democratic Politics in Fiji* (Lawson 1991) was a study of the failure of democracy in Fiji. Lawson argued that the political parliamentary and constitutional structures that were planted by the colonial authorities in Fiji failed to encourage inter-ethnic cooperation and resulted in ethnic suspicion, antagonism and upsurge in nationalism resulting in the coup of 1987. Besides Lawson, Steven Ratuva (2007) and Robbie Robertson (2007) analyse the influences of ethno-nationalism in state making in Fiji and various challenges to the neo-colonial orthodoxy in the form of multiethnic alliances in 1987 and in 1999.

Critical historian Brij Lal (1992a) undertook a detailed synoptic study of the major contours of Fijian history in the twentieth century in his book *Broken Waves*. Lal's analysis is based on a critical historicist methodology as he unmasked the terrains of ethnic conflict in Fiji. His approach has become, as he described, a "journey of self-exploration" (Lal 1992a: XV). In a volume published by the Institute of Commonwealth Studies (Lal 2006), Lal highlighted the tensions between Indigenous Fijian political paramountcy, Indo-Fijians and Europeans. These tensions were carried over after independence of Fiji in the form of a three-legged stool with Indigenous chiefs in control of the state, the Indo-Fijians in control of the economy and the Europeans in control of

international relations. Since independence, the Europeans in Fiji have claimed solidarity with Indigenous Fijians against the Indo-Fijians. However by 1987, Lal claims that ethnic tensions in Fiji were softening due to non-racial voting behaviour.

The elections also disrupted the conventional calculus of Fijian politics. A Fijian-dominated party, representing the Fijian establishment, was defeated. The number of Fijians voting for the Coalition was small, fewer than 10 per cent; 77 per cent of the Fijians voted for the Alliance, and 83 per cent of Indo-Fijians for the National Federation Party. The shift was slight, but the fear of the spreading of the trend of non-racial voting challenged conventional thinking about the operation of politics in Fiji (Lal 2008: 85)

The theme of the role of ethnicity in national politics is also taken up by New Zealand journalist Michael Field, and academics Tupeni Baba and Unaisi Nabobo-Baba.

According to Field, Baba and Nabobo-Baba (2005: 20), it is Fiji's diversity of "language, culture and politics, which is at the core of a tragic cycle of conflict over power. They go on to say that Indigenous cultural assertions have played a major role in nationalist claims on state power. Indigenous Fijians, in particular the "militant section of the Indigenous community" (Lal 2003: 158), have precipitated a coup culture, and Fiji's post-independence constitutions and legislature have failed to manage underlying communal divisions.

Indigenous Fijian chiefs have throughout Fiji's history protected their position in the Indigenous cultural hierarchy and at times taken the role of the colonial overseer by ensuring that Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijians remain divided. Even the new "Fijian ruling class" or the Indigenous elite (Halapua 2003: 122) championed Indigenous

communal living because it provided the cultural legitimacy for claims on wealth, power and privilege.

Critical theorists are not only concerned with power, nationalism and social forces in the making of Fiji history but they also look at the electoral systems and the structure of voter behaviour in Fiji. A pioneering study was conducted by Bernard Grofman and Jon Fraenkel (2005 and 2006) who argued that in Fiji, Alternative Vote (AV) failed to encourage inter-ethnic moderation. Using neo-Downsian methodology on median voter behaviour, Grofman and Fraenkel studied the voter behaviour in the 1999, 2001 and 2006 general elections and concluded that AV did not moderate communal voting patterns. Donald Horowitz (2007: 13-23) has challenged this view, arguing that Grofman and Fraenkel have failed to consider the role of political parties and strategic voting in influencing electoral outcomes. Indigenous Fijian academic Alumita Durutalo (2007: 580) observed that ethnic and communal orientation continues to influence election results in both communal and open seats and that “multicultural politics may take a while to gain acceptance across the ethnic divide”.

In the book *From Election to Coup in Fiji* edited by Stewart Firth and Jon Fraenkel (2007: XXIII), both academics map the “jagged course of Fiji’s modern history” and make some important observations for the future:

More doubtful is whether or not communal solidarity can and will prevail, in the way the constitution-framers envisaged, as the forces that bound both communities into a bipolar two-party system dissipate. If communal solidarity fades and the people of Fiji begin to

divide along different lines, the mechanics and campaign strategies at future elections will be very different from those of 1999, 2001 and 2006. That will complicate matters, and may, by that odd, long and painful route, make the victors in future elections those who are less steeped in the communal politics of the past (Firth and Fraenkel 2007: 9).

The observation highlights the potential fluidity of Fiji politics where future constitutional and electoral engineering could engender a new non-ethnic trajectory and perhaps greater in-group political competitions and better inter-group cooperation.

Inter-group theory has advanced rapidly following Gordon Allport's seminal work *The Nature of Prejudice*. The most notable scholars in the field of inter-group contact after Allport are Thomas Pettigrew and Roel Meertens (1995, 2001) who extended Allport's theory and analysed subtle and blatant prejudice in Western Europe by using a tri-modular social psychological framework around traditional values, cultural differences and positive emotions. On the fiftieth anniversary of the *Nature of Prejudice*, Thomas Pettigrew and Linda Tropp (2005: 266) introduced meta-analytical methodology to the study of prejudice following a five year research project which "covered 515 studies that examined relationships between inter-group contact and prejudice, which were gathered from 1940s through to the year 2000 and together represented responses from 250,493 individuals in 38 nations". The analysis of the data showed that "effects of inter-group contact are significantly stronger for majority groups than for members of minority groups" (Pettigrew and Tropp 2008: 922-934).

In his normative interpretation of inter-group contact, Pettigrew argues that the recommendations of Allport for successful inter-group contact are basically facilitating conditions and should be subjected to meta-analytic testing. Furthermore, he recommends four interrelated directions for the study of inter-group relations: “(1) specifying the processes of inter-group contact; (2) a greater focus upon inter-group contact that leads to negative effects, increased prejudice, distrust, and conflict; (3) placing inter-group contact in its longitudinal, multilevel social context; (4) applying contact to social policy” (Pettigrew 2008: 189).

Research on inter-group conflict in Northern Ireland (Hewstone, Cairns, Voci, Hamberger & Niens 2006: 99-120) has shown that successful implementation of the pre-conditions for inter-group contact, as suggested by Allport, result in better inter-group relations and inter-group trust and forgiveness. Such empirical data from Ireland on inter-group conflict supports Allport’s notion that pre-conditions are effective when implementing strategies for better inter-group relations in divided communities. In the current inter-group contact literature, there is, however, a lack of appreciation on the role of history in the study of inter-group relations. John Dovidio and Samuel Gaertner (2006: 385) acknowledge that an historical approach is complementary to the overall literature on inter-group theory and allows the existing literature to cross disciplinary boundaries. Stephen Worchel and Dawna Coutant (2008: 427) support this observation and add that “the role of history is not given sufficient credence in many explanations of inter-group conflict”. As a result, the history of inter-group conflict is lost under the weight of quantitative data and statistical analysis.

Therefore, my approach to the study of the history of inter-group conflict in Fiji is an attempt to fill this void. To some extent, it can be argued that historical analysis is more closely related to critical theory as discussed earlier in the approach taken by Brij Lal. However, unlike Lal's historical narrative, this thesis integrates critical theoretical framework as reflexive historiography by utilising Fiji history not only to examine inter-group conflict but to actively seek its resolution.

According to Allport (1954: 479), there are historical manifestation of prejudice through discrimination, violence and in-group solidarity. These three stages form the central themes of this thesis and are utilised to locate inter-group conflict in Fiji's history, namely the coups of 1987, the coup of 2000 and the 2006 general elections. The examination of these events as moments in time provides an appreciation of the depth of inter-group conflict in Fiji. However, the application of Allport's theory on inter-group conflict to Fiji has some shortcomings especially in relation to cultural identity, social inequality and inter-group psychology. Nevertheless, this thesis proposes a further step and argues that an analysis of historical moments provides the possibility of conflict resolution by adopting a three-pronged strategy on inter-group conciliation proposed by Allport (1954: 495)-national identity, national therapy (truth and reconciliation) and legislative reforms via parliamentary committees-the links between history and conflict resolution can be established in Fiji.



## **2.5 Conclusion**

There are common themes running across all approaches. Discourse analysis has brought plural narratives to the socio-cultural understanding of Fiji. The ethnographers in Fiji locate a diverse community within the larger cultural context and through field work identified, hope, perception, fears and motivations in the community. The critical theorists are concerned with power, nationalism and the history of Fiji, in particular the ongoing political tensions between ethnic groups. Inter-group theory, as espoused by Allport, has developed its own unique application that focuses on the nature of prejudice mainly through the history of institutional and structural violence. It is within this theoretical context of Allport that I examine inter-group conflict in Fiji and propose this form of analysis as a tool for conflict resolution.

## **Part 2: History of Inter-group Conflict in Fiji**

## **Chapter 3: 1960 to 1987-Establishing Inter-group Conflict**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Following British colonisation in 1874, the Governor of Fiji, Sir Arthur Gordon, moved to protect the Indigenous Fijians from the rigours of European plantation life by importing Indians from India as indentured workers. As a result, by the end of indenture, some 60,000 Indians had made Fiji their home (Lal 1983b). Despite the large number of Indians living in Fiji, there was very little interaction between the Indians and Indigenous Fijians. The colonial authorities ensured that both these communities lived in their own communal settlements and any inter-group contact was unlawful as Indigenous village administrators were empowered to be on the outlook for any Indian attempting to live in a Fijian village (Kelly 1992: 246-267). As a consequence of the colonial policy of keeping the two communities apart, inter-group prejudice developed, resulting in inter-group conflict. In this chapter, I will focus on the history of Fiji from 1960 to 1987. In this period, Fiji gained independence and Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijians for the first time had to learn to co-exist with each other without the oversight of the colonial authorities. Initially, there were overtures of cooperation between the two communities but this interim inter-ethnic compact crumbled as Indigenous Fijian nationalists asserted themselves on to the national stage (Premdas & Steeves 1991: 540-558). The origins of inter-group conflict lay with the ethnic outlook of Indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian leaders in the 1960s. While throughout the post-colonial period these positions shifted, the underlying inter-group prejudice caused by ethnic divisions continued resulting in the

collapse of the constitutional and political settlement brokered by the British colonial authorities.

Social distance between two the communities is an important measure that reflects the degree of underlying prejudice prevalent. Before independence of Fiji in 1970, David Thomas (1969: 269-270) measured the social distance between Indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians during a series of attitudinal studies which highlighted inter-group differences. Furthermore, in 2000, Robert Norton research looked at the socio-cultural factors influencing inter-group differences, indicating that Indo-Fijians saw Indigenous Fijians as culturally inferior while Indigenous Fijians remained concerned about the impact of an increasing Indo-Fijian population on their community (Norton 2000: 95). In addition, Indigenous Fijian views on Indo-Fijians were shaped by the discourse among land, church and hereditary chiefs (Ryle 2010). Many Indo-Fijians leased fertile Indigenous land to produce sugar, were predominantly Hindus and their leaders often engaged in vitriolic debates with Indigenous chiefs on Fiji's political future. Out of the three triggers for prejudice against Indo-Fijians, land was the most critical for it was the collective view of the Indigenous community that political control was necessary to avert the possibility of Indo-Fijian alienation of Indigenous land (Leckie 2002: 132). Indo-Fijians, however, argued that Indigenous land ought to be given to the cultivators as an appreciation of Indo-Fijian hard work and contribution to the economic development of the country since indenture. In summary, the socio-cultural positions of both the communities revolved around ownership and access to Fijian land which to date remains

unresolved, and underpins much of the inter-group tensions (including claims of discriminatory policy) and violence.

### **3.2 1960 to 1987**

In 1965, Indigenous leader Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara created a three-tier party structure to manage Fiji's ethnic politics and formed the Alliance Party of Fiji which had three distinct arms-the Fijian Association, the Indian Alliance and the General Voters (Newton: 1970: 33). The Fijian Association was active in promoting Indigenous Fijian political paramountcy since the 1950s when Indigenous Fijian chiefs rose within the ranks of the colonial bureaucracy, providing political leadership to their community. For example, the Fijian Association was behind the Wakaya Letters of 1956 wherein the chiefs of Fiji invoked the Deed of Cession of 1874, arguing that transfer of political power should be from the Crown to the Indigenous chiefs. In 1959, Fiji witnessed challenges to the colonial authority by a multiracial Fiji Retail and Wholesale Workers Union. The protest by the union ended up in race riots (Howard 1991: 53). However, with the intervention by Indigenous chiefs-Ratu Edward Cakobau and Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara-the short lived rebellion was defeated. The chiefs argued that Indigenous Fijians were manipulated by cunning Indo-Fijian leaders to facilitate their own political agendas (Bain 1989: 15). As a result, inter-ethnic contact was defeated.

In the 1960s, the Indo-Fijian Federation Party was formed following a prolonged sugar cane strike and its leader A.D. Patel called for land reform and spearheaded the

independence campaign. The Federation Party, besides being an Indo-Fijian dominated political party, was led by a lawyer, A.D. Patel, and his colleagues from the Sangam Organisation (formed in 1925). After initially focusing on Indo-Fijian issues, the party formed an agreement with the Fijian National Party in 1969 and attempted to cement inter-ethnic contact and cooperation. During the 1960s, the Indigenous Fijian chiefs remained suspicious of Indo-Fijian leaders (Premdas 1978: 35). However, with the formation of the UN Decolonisation Committee, the international stage was set for Fiji to move towards independence (Alley 1970: 150) despite domestic political condition in Fiji being one of distrust and mutual disrespect. Eight decades of colonisation had created a sharp wedge between the Indo-Fijian and the Indigenous Fijian communities.

Demographics also played a key role in ethnic struggles for power. A majority of Fijians in the 1960s were living in rural areas and only a handful of Indigenous chiefs had emerged with any significant training and education, and these chiefs were committed to Indigenous political paramountcy in a new post-colonial order. The colonial Fijian Administration, entrenched after cession, allowed for social hierarchy to be cemented in villages, districts and provinces and most Indigenous Fijians were entirely removed from commerce. Church, chiefs, customary obligations and basic agriculture were central to the Indigenous Fijian village life while politics and governance was the sole domain of Indigenous chiefs. Indo-Fijians on the other hand had chosen non-agrarian careers and lifestyles and were predominantly middle class doctors, engineers and public servants taking over from Europeans in business (Mamak 1978). The two communities had very little knowledge of each other and as a result both were susceptible to malicious racist propaganda on both sides. One problem was that the Indo-Fijian leaders lacked political

vision and mistakenly pushed for independence when the two communities had virtually no meaningful contact since 1879 when the first boat-load of Indians arrived in Fiji as indentured workers. The Indigenous Fijian leaders saw independence as a chance to reclaim the state from the Crown. Although Indigenous chief Ratu Mara developed some rapport with Indo-Fijian leader A.D. Patel, this was hardly the case at the grassroots level, where racial bias and prejudices were evident (Brookfield 1972). The Ratu Mara-led Alliance Party of Fiji won the election of 1966, but the Indo-Fijian leaders cried foul and resigned, forcing a by-election. Indigenous Fijians immediately took offence and as a consequence the first significant racial tensions flared up in 1968 (Newton 1970: 34).

Indo-Fijian leader A.D. Patel, as a result of race riots in 1968, softened some of his positions on land reform. Ratu Mara continued holding discussions with A.D. Patel and was responsible for achieving consensus with the Indo-Fijian leadership from 1970-1972. In 1969, A.D. Patel died and Siddiq Koya assumed the leadership of the National Federation Party. Koya adopted a more conciliatory approach towards Indigenous Fijians but maintained the push for “common roll”, which was supposed to enhance political equality (Vasil 1972: 25). Nevertheless, under the 1970 Constitution, the Senate had a number of Great Council of Chiefs (GCC) nominees who had powers of veto over legislation affecting Indigenous Fijian interests. However, this provision of the constitution was never properly explained to Indigenous Fijians, who were extended voting rights from 1962 whilst Indians had been electing their representatives since 1929.

The relationship between Koya and Mara was cordial until 1975. Following the announcement of the Street Commission recommendations where Harry Street recommended that Fiji was ready for a common roll electoral system, Ratu Mara was ambivalent and changed his earlier undertaking that he would abide by the Commission's recommendations. Koya and Mara had a fall out and the so called "Fiji's honey moon period" premised on cooperation between two communal leaders was over (Lal 1986: 78). Also, in 1975, an Alliance Member of Parliament caused uproar when he called for the expulsion of Indo-Fijians from Fiji, sparking calls from Indo-Fijian leaders that the Alliance Party was racist. Sakeasi Butadroka, in fact, highlighted the perceptions and concerns of many Indigenous Fijians and was able to tap into Indigenous fears and concerns caused by a lack of interaction between the two communities (Lal 1986: 96-97).

With the formation of the Fijian Nationalist Party, the racial politics entered a new phase as the illusion of multiracial harmony created by Ratu Mara's "Pacific Way", premised upon the concept of a happy and a peaceful multiracial society, crumbled (Fiji-Report for the Year 1970: 5). Fiji was a racially stratified society where cultural isolation of the two communities reinforced prejudices and biases, which were exploited by political leaders for personal ends. In the April 1977 elections, Indo-Fijians moved away from the Alliance Party and the Nationalist Party split the Alliance Party's Indigenous Fijian vote allowing the National Federation Party (NFP) to win power. However, the split within the NFP ranks and the indecision on the part of the NFP leader forced the intervention of the Governor General Ratu Sir George Cakobau, who appointed Ratu Mara as a care-taker Prime Minister (Lal 1986). Seeing the prospect of the repeat of the April 1977 results,



Indigenous Fijian voters came back to the Alliance fold. Race played an important part in the second general elections of 1977 and showed that dissention within Indigenous Fijians could compromise the political position of their leaders. Race continued to dominate Fiji politics until the April elections of 1987 when the Fiji Labour Party and the NFP coalition put forward a new multiracial vision for Fiji and successfully convinced urban Indigenous Fijians to change their voting behaviour. Another important factor besides race was that Indigenous Fijians were a minority in 1987 and as a minority community were concerned by the economically dominant position of the majority Indo-Fijian community. The minority-majority dynamics caused suspicion among Indigenous Fijian nationalists of Indo-Fijian political domination.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

By 1987, Fiji was a racially polarised society and lack of inter-group contact precipitated conflict and divisions. The Fiji Labour Party sought to lessen the effect of race in politics by forming a multiracial trade union sponsored party in 1985. Led by a doctor from western Viti Levu, the Fiji Labour Party formed a coalition with the National Federation Party in 1986 and fought the 1987 election under the banner: "Time for Change" (Bain & Baba 1991: 87-89). However, the entrenched elite of Fiji did not want to give up their control on political power and following the election, members of the Alliance Party formed the nationalist Taukei Movement and used race to mobilise Indigenous Fijians, who had little or no knowledge of the 1970 Constitution. Former Alliance members and Methodist Church Ministers organised a propaganda campaign and formed alliances with

a team from within the Fiji Military Forces, which overthrew the coalition government in May 1987 (Lal 1990: 189). The inter-ethnic tensions that were simmering in Fiji since the 1960s had finally exploded on to the national stage in 1987 in the form of an Indigenous nationalist coup, resulting in the establishment of racial discrimination against Indo-Fijians and the political marginalisation of the community through the promulgation of the 1990 Constitution. The discriminatory conventions established after the 1987 coup are discussed in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 4: The 1987 Coups-Establishing Discrimination**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The coup of May 1987 occurred because of an escalation of inter-group prejudice caused by inter-ethnic tensions. Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijians since independence continued to have their separate spheres of development and the Indigenous-dominated government of the Alliance Party ensured that the two ethnic groups remained isolated in respective communal camps and during elections, Fiji's ethnic leaders exploited racial biases and prejudices (Lal 1983a: 138). While on the Indo-Fijian side, prejudice against Indigenous Fijians was more subtle, Indigenous Fijians since 1975 became aggressive in their anti-Indo-Fijian stand, caused by Indigenous nationalist activism. The military, in particular, started to sympathise with Indigenous nationalists and with the defeat of the Alliance Party, the military leaders intervened in politics resulting in the implementation of structural and institutional violence in the form of discrimination at all levels against Indo-Fijians, beginning with the abrogation of the multiracial 1970 Constitution.

### **4.2 The 1970 Constitution**

The 1970 Constitution that was abrogated in 1987 was a product of a series of constitutional negotiations between the Indigenous Fijian and the Indo-Fijian leaders in the 1960s. During a debate at the Legislative Council, the late leader of the opposition Siddiq Koya warned that unless moderate attitude prevailed on both sides of the ethnic divide, fierce Indigenous nationalism would take hold, resulting in violent ethnic conflict

(Lal 1986: 76). The Indo-Fijian leadership remained firm on its support for a common roll franchise, which was seen by the Indigenous Fijians as a means to dominate them politically. Following the death of the Federation leader A.D. Patel, both communities to some extent moderated their position and agreed to a compromise constitutional arrangement called the 1970 Constitution.

Under section 32 of the 1970 Constitution, Fiji was a parliamentary democracy with a bi-cameral legislature where the Indigenous Fijians and the Indo-Fijians elected 22 members each and the General Voters elected 8 in a 52 member Parliament. The Constitution also provided for communal representation of 12 seats for both major ethnic communities and 10 non-ethnic national seats so that there could be inter-group contact. The General Voters had 3 communal and 5 national seats.

Under the 1970 Constitution, a voter had four votes: One for the communal constituency and three votes for Fijian, Indian and General Voter seats. In the Senate, the Indigenous Great Council of Chiefs had a disproportionately higher number of nominees. Under section 45 of the Constitution, there were 22 appointed Senate members including 8 appointed by the Governor General of Fiji on the advice of the Great Council of Chiefs; 7 on the advice of the Prime Minister; 6 on the advice of the opposition and 1 appointed on the advice of the Council of Rotuma.

In addition, changes to laws on Indigenous interests required endorsement by at least 8 Indigenous Senators nominated by the Great Council of Chiefs. Under section 134 (a) of

the 1970 Constitution a person was regarded as “Fijian” if the persons descendants were Indigenous inhabitants-Melanesian, Micronesian or Polynesian. Indigenous Fijian nationalists were unhappy with the broad definition of “Fijian” under the 1970 Constitution and agitated to have the Constitution changed but the urgency to change the Constitution increased after the 1987 April elections when Indo-Fijian and Indigenous trade union leaders won the election by forming a broad class alliance.

### **4.3 The 1987 Coup**

Less than a week in government, the political framework established by the 1970 Constitution crumbled and the multiracial FLP-NFP coalition government was deposed in a bloodless military coup. At about 10:00 am on 14 May 1987, the Royal Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) under the leadership of Lieutenant-Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka abducted cabinet members from the Parliament in Suva and incarcerated them at the Queen Elizabeth Barracks (QEB) in Tamavua. According to Robertson and Tamanisau (1989: 217-218), the coup leader-Sitiveni Rabuka-had military training at the New Zealand Staff College in 1969 and 1972, the India Defence Services Wellington Staff College in Tamil Nadu, the United States Pacific Army Management Seminar in Manila in 1981, and trained with the 6<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Rifles and served in Lebanon in 1980 and Sinai (1984-85).

After overthrowing the government, Colonel Rabuka dismissed his superiors, Commander Epeli Nailatikau and his chief of staff, Jim Sanday. The news of the coup

started to spread from Suva city and many Indo-Fijians panicked for they feared that any new political order would lead to further institutionalisation of discrimination and erosion of their political rights. Some in the community thought that the abduction of the government was some sort of anti-terrorist exercise to protect cabinet ministers from Indigenous nationalists, who were involved in demonstrations throughout Fiji while others contemplated the military's complicity with the nationalists. Soon, it became clear that the military, in particular officers with strong nationalist inclination, had overthrown a constitutionally elected government.

The coup leader Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka ordered the defeated Alliance Party of Fiji to form the Council of Ministers. Historian Brij Lal (1988:79) notes that the speed with which the Council of Ministers was put together, in a matter of hours after the coup, was truly astonishing; and the apparent enthusiasm of many of those who joined it—broad smiles, victory signs and clenched fists punching the air—gave strong hints of the Alliance Party's collusion and the foreknowledge of the coup. The deposed ministers were at first incarcerated at the Queen Elizabeth Barracks and later moved to the deposed Prime Minister's residence in Veiuto in Suva.

Eventually, the Indo-Fijian MPs were separated and moved to Borron House in Suva. The actions of the military were troubling and the Indo-Fijian business community organised a strike on 16 May 1987. Fiji came to a standstill as a result and people rushed to stock goods. Foreign journalists poured into the country and attempted to make sense of the military coup. However, journalists were to operate under strict military censorship and according to Robertson and Tamanisau, "Radio Australia's Trevor Watson, who

broke the story of Bavadra's plea for help (relayed back to the country on short wave), was confined to his hotel room and later asked to leave Fiji” (Robertson and Tamanisau 1988: 75).

Media reports were heavily censored by the military as the people of Fiji relied on short wave transmissions from Australia and New Zealand for information (Robertson and Tamanisau 1988: 75). Coup leader Sitiveni Rabuka made a press statement where he emphasised that military had information that Indigenous nationalists planned widespread demonstrations against the deposed government and further argued that Indigenous Fijians had become foreigners in their own land and that he was chosen by god to restore Indigenous Fijian political power (Dean & Ritova 1988: 11). The Indigenous nationalist Taukei Movement openly supported the coup and called on Indigenous Fijians to embrace the military. Many Indo-Fijians including academics at the University of the South Pacific (Nandan 1991) questioned Rabuka's rationale for the coup and argued that the role of the military was to protect the constitutional government and not overthrow it on the pretext that a minority within the Indigenous community did not agree with the outcome of the April 1987 general elections.

In order to further support military intervention, Indigenous nationalists and the military started to inform Indigenous Fijians that the deposed government was anti-West and had associations with the Libyan regime and the Soviet Union. This was a part of a carefully orchestrated campaign to justify the removal of a number of senior Indo-Fijian public servants from office (Hagan 1988). By 18 May, the Fiji military was in total control but

parts of the community were unhappy with the coup and near Nadi International Airport supporters of the deposed coalition government clashed with police and a frustrated Indo-Fijian Fiji Labour Party supporter attempted, without success, to hijack an Air New Zealand aircraft to protest against discrimination and political marginalisation of his community.

On the night of 19 May, members of the deposed coalition government were released by the military. The coalition members under the leadership of Dr. Bavadra attempted to restore parliamentary democracy and in an ABC television interview, Bavadra called the coup leaders “traitors” and suggested they be charged with treason. The utterances of Dr. Bavadra inflamed Indigenous nationalists, who argued that Bavadra was a puppet of Indo-Fijian leaders and on 20 May 1987, Indigenous nationalists armed with sticks and rocks attacked Indo-Fijians at Albert Park in Suva. According to Lal, this was the worst Indigenous Fijian-Indo-Fijian riot as “some 100 Indians were injured with many requiring hospital treatment” (Lal 1988: 86). After the riot, Indo-Fijians started to flee Fiji.

While the Indigenous nationalists continued to harass and attack Indo-Fijians, the Governor General of Fiji Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau stunned the nation by granting immunity to the coup leader Sitiveni Rabuka. A New Zealand broadcaster responded to the amnesty in the following way by stating that “it appears that in Fiji if you hijack an airplane, you get hit over the head with a bottle of whisky, but if you hijack a government, you get pardoned” (Robertson & Tamanisau 1988: XV). The action of the



Governor General was seen with suspicion by many Indo-Fijians who argued that the Governor General was not in control and was in collusion with the military to institute discriminatory policies of the Indigenous nationalists (Robertson & Tamanisau 1988: XV).

The strike by the Indo-Fijian community had started to lose strength because it was poorly coordinated. As the protest from the business community was winding down, Indo-Fijian farmers decided to boycott the sugar cane harvests over fears of loss to subsidised prices under the European Union's (EUs) Lome Conventions. Furthermore, the farmers were worried that harvest boycott would result in the military taking over farms. The Governor General promptly intervened and provided assurances to the farmers and obtained valuable time to attend to other pressing matters, including the establishment of an interim-government (Robertson and Tamanisau 1988: 82).

The interim-government was made up of defeated politicians from the Alliance Party and members of the Indigenous nationalist Taukei Movement, including Ratu Mara, Sitiveni Rabuka, Filipe Bole, Jone Vaisamasama, Livai Nasilivata, Apenisa Kuruvaqila, Josua Cavalevu and others. Only two members of the deposed coalition government, Dr. Timoci Bavadra and Harish Sharma, were included. However, after consulting with party members, both Bavadra and Sharma refused to serve on the interim government and argued that at least 50 per cent of the members should come from the ranks of the deposed government. The Governor General refused to acquiesce to the demands of the coalition and sought guidance from the Indigenous Great Council of Chiefs, which

endorsed the ethnically divisive agenda of the Indigenous nationalists and supported the actions of the Governor General to resolve that Indo-Fijians be compensated for their properties and given one-way tickets to India (Ramesh 2007b: 167).

Furthermore, the Great Council of Chiefs failed to show national leadership and gave the military a free-hand to harass, intimidate, discriminate and suppress Indo-Fijian union activities. As a result, regional trade unions in Australia and New Zealand imposed sanctions on Fiji as the Reserve Bank imposed drastic economic counter-measures, including the devaluation of the Fiji dollar by 18 per cent in June 1987 and revision of figures relating to tourist arrivals, which continued with the downward spiral by as much as 71 per cent (Robertson and Tamanisau 1988: 118). Seeing the economy in difficulties, the Governor General of Fiji attempted to restore political stability and appointed a Constitutional Review Committee led by Sir John Falvey. According to the Terms of Reference of 11 June 1987, the Governor General Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau appointed a Constitutional Review Committee comprising of members from the Great Council of Chiefs, the deposed coalition government and the Alliance Party. The Committee was to review the 1970 Constitution and recommend amendments that guaranteed Indigenous Fijian political paramountcy (Terms of Reference for the Constitution Review Committee, 11 June 1987). The inquiry commenced on 6 July and the final findings were delivered to the Governor General on 31 July 1987.

The Committee was aided by Professor Keith Patchet, Emirtus Professor of Law at the University of Wales and at the beginning of deliberations, the Committee noted the

Declaration of Commonwealth Principles agreed by the Commonwealth Heads of Government in Singapore in 1971, the Lusaka Declaration on Racism and Racial Prejudice and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination. After receiving more than 800 written and 161 oral submissions, the Committee recommended that there shall be no change to the constitutional arrangement whereby Her Majesty is Queen of Fiji and the Head of State; the Senate be abolished and the Parliament become a single chamber; the House of Representatives consist of 8 Great Council of Chiefs members elected by the Council, 28 Indigenous Fijian members to be elected by communal voting, 22 Indo-Fijian members to be elected by communal voting, 8 General Voters members elected by General communal roll, 1 member elected by the Council of Rotuma and 4 members appointed by the Prime Minister . The Committee also recommended that there be no ethnic qualifications as to who could become a Prime Minister; a requirement of residence for the purposes of registering voters; a requirement for entry on the Indigenous roll to be consistent with the Indigenous Fijian birth register (Vola ni Kawa Bula); the national roll be abolished and all seats in the House of Representatives to be elected on communal basis; and the definition of “Fijian” in the Constitution be replaced by a strict determination rule that excludes descendants of Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia (Report of the Constitutional Review Committee, 31 July 1987).

The above recommendations were classified as the “majority view” of Atfoa Varea, Isikeli Mataitoga, Adi Litia Cakobau, Ratu Jone Mataitini, Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka, Senator Aporosa Rakoto, Tomasi Vakatora, Filipe Bole, Apisai Tora and David

Pickering. Members and supporters of the deposed coalition government represented in the Constitution Review Committee including Jai Ram Reddy, Ratu Mosese Tuisawau, Krishna Datt, Dr. Tupeni Baba, Dr. Sahu Khan and Kanital Parshotam formed the “minority view” according to which Indo-Fijians wanted to retain the 1970 Constitution and that 60 per cent of the submissions did not favour any changes to the Constitution. Seeing that the Governor General had compromised his position by aligning himself with the Indigenous nationalists and the military, members of the coalition government took their campaign overseas, arguing that the regime in Fiji had discriminated against Indo-Fijians by ensuring that political processes in place excluded them from participating effectively in any post-coup political settlement (Lal 1990).

The deposed Prime Minister of Fiji, Dr. Timoci Bavadra and his supporters went overseas to seek assistance from the international community in restoring democratic rule and ending discrimination against Indo-Fijians. There was widespread Indigenous in-group belief that the deposed government was an affront to Indigenous interest, therefore, the military coup and the political marginalisation of Indo-Fijians were entirely justified (Lal 1990: 203). The members of the deposed government realised this emerging belief among Indigenous Fijians and went overseas with a hope that pressure from outside Fiji would arrest this emerging community pattern. In London, Dr. Bavadra tried to meet with the Queen but instead was granted an audience with her private secretary Sir William Hesselstine. According to Victor Lal (1990: 203), “the Queen declined to meet with Bavadra after meetings with the Governor General in whom she had re-affirmed her confidence in the restoration of parliamentary democracy”. Australia and the United

States reaffirmed their support for the Governor General but refused to directly call for the re-instatement of the deposed government. The Prime Minister of New Zealand, David Lange, however, ordered the New Zealand Defence Force to intervene but was advised against such a move by the defence chiefs (The Fiji Times, 10 April 1987).

The Governor General realised that the nation was divided and his associations with the coup leaders had widened suspicion and distrust, in particular among the Indo-Fijians. As a result, Ratu Penaia embarked on a new political conciliation process and spearheaded a series of meetings between the Alliance Party of Fiji and the FLP-NFP coalition.

Nevertheless, the process initiated by the Governor General was fundamentally flawed because it was based on the rejection of the Indo-Fijian out-group. The Governor General Ratu Penaia Ganilau instigated political rejection of the Indo-Fijians by ensuring that the post-coup political process he initiated was stacked in favour of Indigenous nationalists (Lal 1988). Meanwhile, the deposed coalition government continued with legal action against Ratu Penaia, arguing against actions of the Governor General in dissolving the parliament. The Indigenous nationalists were unhappy and argued that the coalition was putting pressure on the Governor General and had insulted Indigenous Fijians by taking a paramount traditional chief to court. On 5 September, “the Indigenous Taukei supporters dug a Lovo (a pit for cooking cannibal victims) in front of the government building in Suva, warning Dr. Bavadra to withdraw his civil suit against the Governor General” (Kaplan 1988: 98). The lovo was the beginning of an orchestrated campaign to derail conciliation talks as Indigenous nationalists went on a violent rampage across Suva. The military failed to quell the unrest and arrest Indigenous ring leaders (Ramesh 2007b:

168). The military warned the public to stay away from the city in preparation for a protest march by mostly Indigenous convicts (Lal 1988).

Prisoners, under military escort, from the medium security prison protested against the deposed government and in particular against Bavadra's legal action against the Governor General. The deposed Prime Minister realised that the Indigenous nationalists were expanding their campaign and that it had the potential to derail talks between the coalition and the Alliance Party and as a result withdrew the writ. Nevertheless, the nationalist campaign against Indo-Fijians continued and on 21 September 1987, Indigenous nationalists once again attacked Indo-Fijians in Suva and rioted in the streets. The military in response failed to control the rioters, raising issues of the military's complicity in the incident (Howard 1991).

The military was actively working with the Indigenous nationalist and there were reports that the coup leader did not want any form of conciliation between the deposed government members and the Alliance Party. Despite planned street violence in Suva, an agreement was reached between the opposing parties, known as the Deuba Accord, with a commitment to establish a Government of National Unity. According to Brij Lal:

The Deuba Accord agreed upon the formation of a bi-partisan caretaker government which would guide the nation to a solution to Fiji's constitutional problems; re-establish Fiji's respect for law and order and put the economy upon a firm footing. The new Council of State, to be chaired by the Governor General himself, would consist of 20

Ministers, with an equal number from each of the two parties, sharing power on an equal basis (Lal 1988: 117).

Before the Deuba Accord could be implemented, Rabuka, who was now promoted to the rank of commander, executed a second coup and deposed the Governor General, consolidating the nationalist grip on political power.

#### **4.4 The Second Coup of 1987**

At about 4 pm on 25 September 1987, Fiji once again fell into an abyss of political uncertainty. Radio stations were taken over by the Fiji military and members of the deposed coalition government were detained at the Naboro maximum security prison. Armed soldiers established checkpoints and warned the public not to engage in any anti-coup activities. Rabuka went on air and justified the second military coup on grounds that the Deuba Accord had compromised the objective of the first coup by allowing power sharing between the two dominant communities.

Members of the Fiji Trade Union Council were detained and their offices were closed down. According to Hamish MacDonald of the Far Eastern Review, “diplomats from Australia, New Zealand, Britain, France, Malaysia, South Korea, Japan, China, Papua New Guinea, United States and Tuvalu met Rabuka on 28 September and told him that they only recognised the authority of the Governor General” (Far Eastern Economic Review, 8 October 1987). Robert Keith-Reid noted that on 4 October Dr. Bavadra was

stopped and chased by soldiers and he feared for his life (Far Eastern Economic Review, 15 October 1987).

On 6 October Rabuka declared Fiji a republic and appointed a 21 member Executive Council. According to Victor Lal, the Council included two senior military officers, at least 6 members of the Indigenous Taukei Movement and 7 members of the Alliance Party. The only Indo-Fijian in the line-up was Irene Jai Narayan, who became the Minister for Indian Affairs (Lal 1990: 209). Besides the new Executive Council, the military promulgated the Fundamental Freedoms Decree No. 12 and the Sunday Observance Decree, which banned all recreational and commercial activities on Sunday. Not long after, reports started to surface on gross human rights violations by soldiers against Indo-Fijians, including forcing individuals to walk naked, stand for up to 24 hours in an iron water tank, lie or sit naked for hours on a hot tar-sealed road, submit to rape and other forms of sexual assault and walk long distances carrying a heavy load (Bain 1989: 211).

Under the Sunday Observance Decree, children playing soccer were detained for days and Indo-Fijian women were arrested and harassed for washing clothes near a river bank. A number of human rights abuses were documented by Amnesty International, the US Department of State and the Fiji Independent News Service (FINS). Reports of continuing human rights abuses and international condemnation forced Rabuka to hand over executive power to Ratu Penaia and Ratu Mara with the former becoming the President and the latter Prime Minister in the new Republic of Fiji. Despite handing over



political power, Fiji was, more than ever, a deeply divided community with Indo-Fijians uncertain of their future and Indigenous Fijian supporters of the deposed coalition government unsure of their place in the Indigenous society (Bain 1989: 212).

By the end of 1987, Rabuka established an interim government with Ratu Mara as the interim Prime Minister and Ratu Penaia as the President. Despite handing over authority to a “civilian” government, Rabuka continued as the Minister for Home Affairs and in 1989, the constitutional review process restarted with the appointment of a senior military officer Colonel Paul Manueli to the Constitution Review Committee, which documented the grievances of the Indigenous nationalists, the chiefs and the army and largely ignored the submissions from the Indo-Fijians made up of the FLP and the NFP coalition (Premdas & Steeves 1991: 158-159). In 1990, a new racially weighted constitution was promulgated. Unlike the 1970 constitution, this constitution ensured that Indigenous Fijians, in particular Indigenous chiefs, had a monopoly on political power and the military continued to play a political role in the affairs of the state. Brij Lal (1992b: 388) noted that with diminishing fear of the threat of Indo-Fijian political dominance, “political fragmentation will be a continued feature of Taukei political life”.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this historical narrative suggests that a lack of inter-group and inter-racial contact allowed the military and the Indigenous nationalists to undermine an elected multiethnic government. Indigenous nationalists propagated ungrounded claims that the

government was dominated by Indo-Fijians who had ambitions to takeover Indigenous Fijian land. Moreover, the military sympathised with Indigenous nationalists and usurped political power on their behalf, highlighting the politicisation of ethnicised armed forces. Following the military takeover, Indo-Fijians were purged from senior government positions and draconian laws were imposed as the military leaders sought assistance from the traditional authority to get Fiji back to normalcy. An elaborate system of institutionalised discrimination was also established where Indigenous Fijians, especially those who supported the coup, rose quickly to positions of influence and power while Indo-Fijians were denied fundamental basic rights and suffered discrimination at all social levels. Without any meaningful inter-group contact or structures to improve inter-group relations, the two communities in Fiji remained divided and some thirteen years later, the events unleashed in 1987 repeated resulting in organised physical violence against Indo-Fijians once again in the coup of 2000.

## **Chapter 5: The 2000 Coup-Establishing Inter-group Violence**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Discrimination against Indo-Fijians was strengthened with the implementation of the 1990 Constitution as under the racially discriminatory constitution, Indo-Fijians were relegated to the opposition bench and discriminatory policies against them were strengthened. Moreover, continued Indigenous Fijian support for discrimination and political marginalisation of Indo-Fijians led Indo-Fijian political parties to focus on strategies of peaceful constitutional change.

In 1990, the alliance between the union-based FLP and the business-centric NFP broke following the death of Dr. Bavadra and Sitiveni Rabuka was elected leader of the Indigenous nationalist sponsored Soqosoqo ni Vakevulewa ni Taukei Party (SVT), which won the 1992 general election. According to Ralph Premdas (1993: 1006), “the SVT won 30 seats with 66.6% of all Indigenous Fijian votes”. As Brij Lal (1992b) predicted, once Indo-Fijians were removed from the political scene through state-sponsored discrimination, the fault lines within the Indigenous political order started to appear.

There were two kinds of tensions within the Indigenous community. The first involved discord between the moderates and the ethno-nationalists. The moderate Indigenous Fijians expressed a desire for a multiracial Fiji and equal political partnership with Indo-Fijians whereas Indigenous ethno-nationalists advocated Indigenous political

paramountcy (Duncan 1991: 221-239). The second involved political struggles between the chiefdoms of Lau and Bau for the hegemony of the SVT. On 31 October 1991, at the SVT Annual Conference at Suva Civic Centre, the interim Prime Minister of Fiji, Ratu Mara, positioned his wife Ro Lala Mara to take over as the President of the SVT party. However, Sitiveni Rabuka won the presidency by nine votes and was endorsed by the chiefs of Bau as the leader of Indigenous Fijians (The Fiji Times, 1 November 1991).

Despite the election of Sitiveni Rabuka as the leader of the SVT, Ratu Mara supported Joevata Kamikamica, the interim Finance Minister, who challenged Rabuka after the 1992 election. The Tensions between two aspiring Indigenous candidates within the SVT, Sitiveni Rabuka and Josevata Kamikamica, erupted for the position of the Prime Minister after the 1992 elections but Rabuka survived the leadership challenge even though the discontent over the issue was not fully settled (The Fiji Times, 1 January 1993). The Rabuka government also got embroiled in a controversy surrounding a million dollar out of court settlement for Suva businessman Tony Stephen, who was allegedly wrongfully detained by the military in 1988 (Fiji Parliamentary paper no. 45, July 1993). The new Rabuka administration through its Attorney General Apaitia Seru offered a settlement to Tony Stephens to avoid an embarrassment of defeat in a major civil suit involving the military and hoped that such a settlement would thwart legal actions from others who may have had their freedom restricted under the security decrees imposed after the May 1987 coups.

After a tumultuous six months Prime Minister Rabuka on 4 December 1992 proposed a Government of National Unity (GNU) to deflect growing conflict and rebellion within the Indigenous Fijian community (The Fiji Times, 1 January 1993) but Rabuka's calls for "the promotion of national reconciliation, stability and unity" were met with widespread criticism from the Indo-Fijian opposition parties and from within the Indigenous nationalist community. Senior FLP member Tupeni Baba remarked that while on one hand Rabuka was promoting the GNU, on the other he contradicted himself when he stated that "the NFP leader Jai Ram Reddy and his FLP counterpart Mahendra Chaudhry would gain very little from being part of such a government because it was based on the racially slanted 1990 Constitution" (The Fiji Times, 18 January 1993). Not only Baba but SVT backbencher Josevata Kamikamica expressed serious reservations about the GNU and Namosi MP Ratu Ifereimi Buaserau went further and called on Rabuka to step down as Prime Minister (The Daily Post, 15 March 1993). The final showdown between Rabuka and dissidents within the SVT erupted over the 1994 budget. Opponents within the SVT criticised the government for raising duties on basic consumer items, including powdered milk, canned fish and rice and on 29 November 1993, the 1994 budget was defeated (The Review, December/January 1994: 10). Seven SVT MPs voted against the budget including Ilai Kuli, Ratu Emosi Vuakatagane, Ratu Serupepeli Nailvalu, Ratu Viliame Dreunimismisi, Viliame Saulekaleka, Viliame Gonalevu and Josevata Kamikamica. On 15 January 1994, a new Indigenous Fijian political party, the Fijian Association Party, was formed in Suva (The Fiji Times, 17 January 1994).

In December 1993, the Great Council of Chiefs met to deliberate on Indigenous Fijian disunity. It was the same chiefs that had blessed Rabuka's May 1987 coups and had sponsored the SVT, which was supposed to unite Indigenous Fijians against the Indo-Fijians. Rabuka was asked to explain the defeat of the 1994 budget and he responded by arguing that if Indigenous Fijians were to protect and safeguard their collective future as a community the best guarantee was to ensure that they keep effective control of the national government (The Daily Post, 17 December 1993). In fact, Rabuka was sending contradictory messages to both the Indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian communities and as a result, Rabuka was alienating its most important support base-the Indigenous nationalist hardliners, who expressed concern about his proposed GNU.

Fiji went to the polls again in less than two years due to Indigenous Fijian disunity and the SVT was once again returned to office by a thirty one seat majority. Tensions also increased during and after the elections within the Indo-Fijian camp, as the FLP lost support and won only seven seats compared to thirteen in 1992, whereas the NFP increased its total share of communal seats from fourteen to twenty. Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka quickly developed a working relationship with the NFP and finalised the composition of the Constitution Review Commission (CRC) (House of Representatives, Daily Hansard, 31 March, 1994: 7; also see: House of Representatives, Daily Hansard, 24 June, 1994: 1337-1338).

On 15 March 1995, the CRC was appointed with Sir Paul Reeves, Brij Lal and Tomasi Vakatora as members. After more than a year of hearings, the CRC Report was tabled in

the Fiji Parliament on 10 September 1996. A Joint Parliamentary Committee then started negotiations and by April 1997, the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Constitution had reached a consensus. It was agreed by all parties that there would be forty six communal roll constituencies and twenty five common roll constituencies (The Fiji 1997 Constitution).

Under the new deal, the Prime Minister of Fiji could be from any ethnic group and the Senate would remain an appointed entity, contrary to the recommendations of the CRC. The Constitutional Amendment Act of 1997 allowed for a multi-racial cabinet, but retained some of the discriminatory provisions of the 1990 Constitution such as affirmative action programs for Indigenous Fijians. The new constitution deal was hailed by both the regional and the international community as a landmark achievement. However, not everyone in Fiji was in agreement with the constitutional outcome. The FLP leader, Mahendra Chaudhry, called the deal a "sell-out" and similar sentiments were expressed by Indigenous Fijian nationalists. Chaudhry, in fact, launched one of the major campaigns against the constitutional consensus, labelling it "a recipe for continued ethnic compartmentalisation" (Agence France-Presse, 11 April 1996). Following the consensus on the constitution, the political campaign among Indo-Fijian leaders shifted to India after the Leader of the Opposition Jai Ram Reddy informed the Government of India about the new constitutional deal and requested support in moving the country forward. However, Chaudhry urged India to be cautious and take into consideration the unresolved issue of expiring leases under the Agricultural Landlords and Tenants Act (ALTA). Furthermore, Chaudhry sharply criticised the constitutional consensus and urged the

Commonwealth Heads of Government against Fiji's re-entry into the Commonwealth (BBC, 13 September 1997). Indigenous Fijians largely saw Chaudhry's actions as anti-Indigenous Fijian, which resulted in further erosion of the already dismal Indigenous Fijian support for the Fiji Labour Party.

Dissent within the Soqosoqo ni Vakevulewa ni Taukei Party (SVT) increased after the promulgation of the new constitution as Indigenous SVT members further split and formed the Veitokani ni Lewenivanua Vakarisito (VLV) Party in 1998. In the western part of Fiji, veteran politician Apisai Tora spearheaded the establishment of a regional based Party of National Unity (PANU) and the FLP successfully negotiated an agreement with the Fijian Association Party (FAP) and the PANU (The Independent, 5 May 1999). The VLV candidates in the lead up to the 1999 elections continually attacked the SVT, charging that the party had lied and cheated its way to power. In a long list of complaints against the SVT, the VLV argued that the government was largely responsible for the National Bank of Fiji scandal in 1995, high unemployment, the Tony Stephens' deed of settlement fiasco, escalating crime, and impoverishment of Indigenous Fijians. In response, the SVT targeted the leader of the VLV, Poseci Bune, accusing him of misuse of office during his tenure as Fiji's representative to the United Nations. However, the VLV remained undeterred and one of its candidates, Napote Vere, claimed that there was a mafia group within the SVT with plans to ensure that the party held power at all cost. According to Alumita Durutalo (1999: 90), "the 1999 elections saw the re-emergence of pre-colonial vanua under the guise of alternative Fijian parties, including the FAP, the VLV and the PANU". The FLP successfully consolidated the Indo-Fijian votes and



fragmented the Indigenous Fijian ones through pre-election preference deals with its coalition partners and as a result won thirty six seats (Ramesh 2007a: 17).

According to Jon Fraenkel, the result of the 1999 general election was achieved by “artificially manipulating the electoral systems to discriminate against extremist parties” (Fraenkel 2000b: 104). However, Satendra Prasad (1999:57) argued that the FLP-led coalition was a more class based political momentum similar to the one in 1987. The FLP, the FAP and the PANU combination concentrated its campaign on economic and social issues, including low rates of economic growth, declining investment rates and high employment.

## **5.2 Indigenous Nationalist Revival**

The revival of the Indigenous nationalist movement in 2000 was driven by the anger of a segment of the Indigenous population against the Peoples’ Coalition Government. On 4 April, 2000, the Indigenous nationalist Taukei Movement was revived in Lautoka by former Party of National Unity leader, Apisai Tora. At the meeting, the Taukei activists collected more than 100 signatures on a draft petition, which outlined grievances including opposition to the Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Act (ALTA). Meanwhile, the Minister for Labour, Industrial Relations and Immigration Ratu Tevita Momoedonu shrugged off this revival as nothing more than “sour grapes” (Fijilive, 5 April 2000). Nevertheless, the revival came after reports that the Land Use Commission (LUC), championed by the Peoples’ Coalition Government, would be established to encourage

better utilisation of Indigenous land. Ralph Premdas (2002: 26) noted at this time that the protection of Fijian interests, in particular “Fijian land” became a pressing nationalist issue.

According to the former Native Land Trust Board General Manager, Maika Qarikau, the proposed Land Use Commission was a waste of money. Qarikau clarified that the NLTB was already fulfilling most of the Commission’s objectives and there were existing arms of the Government doing what the Commission intended to achieve (The Fiji Times, 3 April 2000). However, barely a week after the launch of the Taukei Movement in Lautoka, the Rewa Province Taukei Movement was formed on 8 April at Nadoi village (The Fiji Times, 9 April 2000). The movement comprised of representatives of the tikina of Rewa and Burebasaga. Ro Alifereti Tuisawau confirmed that the movement would support the Native Land Trust Board's stand on land and totally supported Qarikau and his staff. Besides Rewa, Macuata landowners and Tui Wailevu, Ratu Kinijoji Maivalili of the Tikina Wailevu in Cakaudrove expressed disappointment that Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry had opted to disrespect their wishes (The Fiji Times, 4 April, 2000. Also refer to The Fiji Times, 9 April 2000).

On the political front, government coalition partner, the VLV, reconsidered its support for the Fiji Labour Party as Acting Secretary-General of the party, Joe Vosanibola, confirmed that party officials had been pressured from members and followers of the party to withdraw from the government. Meanwhile, another government coalition partner, the Fijian Association Party Western Constituency, put its support behind the Taukei Movement and asked the Party Leader Adi Kuini Speed to step down at a branch

meeting in Lautoka on 8 April 2000. At that meeting, former Cabinet minister and founder of the Taukei Movement Apisai Tora was invited to participate. Fijian Association party West branch president, Ratu Viliame Dreunimisimisi, confirmed that the revived Taukei Movement was likely to gather support in its fight to win back the rights of Indigenous Fijians.

A cabinet team was sent to the west to persuade the Indigenous Fijian chiefs not to support the Taukei Movement, which held a failed public demonstration in Lautoka on 20 April 2000. Despite this failed attempt, the Taukei Movement successfully advanced a view of hatred and aggression which would later culminate into violence against the Peoples' Coalition Government and Indo-Fijians in mainly rural Fiji (PACNEWS, 17 April 2000). Fearing an upsurge of Indigenous nationalism similar to 1987, six Fijian ministers- Labour Minister, Ratu Tevita Momoedonu; Agriculture Minister, Poseci Bune; Sports Minister, Ponipate Lesavua; Home Affairs Minister, Jioji Uluinakauvadra; Communications Minister, Meli Bogileka; and Lands Minister, Ratu Mosese Volavola- started a three-day tour on 17 April 2000 and visited 10 villages (The Fiji Times, 18 April 2000). Two chiefs-Tui Sabeto Ratu Kaliova Mataitoga and Marama Tui Ba Adi Sainimili Cagilaba-refused to meet the cabinet delegation and at the height of the extensive public relations campaign by the government to get the Indigenous chiefs on side, the Macuata Provincial Council endorsed the Taukei Movement in its fight to remove the government of Mahendra Chaudhry from power.

Following a failed Taukei Movement protest march on 20 April 2000, political organisers promised a better performance at a nationalist protest march in Suva on 28 April 2000.

About 4,000 people marched through Suva in support of the SVT party and the Taukei Movement for the Prime Minister to step down. A group of SVT and Taukei Movement members later presented their petition to the Great Council of Chiefs, requesting a dissolution of the Chaudhry government, changes to the 1997 Constitution, abolition of the Land Use Commission, all Schedule A and B land to be returned to landowners and the mahogany deal to be reviewed (Fiji Village News, 28 April 2000). There were rumours that Indigenous nationalists had infiltrated the army and that segments of the military would assist in over-throwing the Peoples' Coalition Government. However, the Minister for Home Affairs, Gaffar Ahmed, shrugged off these suggestions as the Taukei Movement intensified its anti-government campaign.

### **5.3 19 May 2000 – Coup Three**

On 19 May, 2000, at 10:00 am about seven Indigenous nationalists, armed with automatic rifles, stormed into the Fiji Parliament and held forty MPs and Cabinet Ministers, including Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry hostage for 56 days. Immediately following the news of the illegal takeover, supporters of the coup went on a rampage, petrol bombing and looting about 200 Indo-Fijian and Chinese-owned shops in Suva's Central Business District. At about 1:00 pm, coup leader George Speight, son of SVT MP Sam Speight, installed Ratu Timoci Silatolu as the Interim Prime Minister of Fiji and at 1:30 pm, suspended the 1997 Constitution, the elected government, the Great Council of Chiefs and the President (The Sydney Morning Herald, 20 May 2000; The Daily Telegraph, 20 May 2000).

After the Suva rampage, the President of Fiji, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara issued a statement denouncing the illegal takeover and imposed a dusk to dawn curfew. Two battalions of soldiers were despatched to downtown Suva and police cleared the affected area and established roadblocks. The presence of soldiers on the street did not stop the coup sympathisers to continue their rampage across the capital city. In Suva, homes were targeted by Indigenous Fijian nationalists and many Indo-Fijian homes were attacked and at night. Tony Wall of The New Zealand Herald reported on 24 May 2000 that an Indo-Fijian settlement near Suva “endured nightly reign of racial terror” (The New Zealand Herald, 24 May 2000).

As the violence took place in the streets, the Chairman of the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC), Sitiveni Rabuka, continued to hold discussions with the coup leader in an attempt to resolve the political crisis (Fijilive, 19 May 2000). On 20 May 2000, rumours surfaced that Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry was beaten by his captors and forced to sign a resignation letter. Also beaten was the PM’s son Rajendra Chaudhry along with other Indo-Fijian Ministers. At 5:00 am on 21 May 2000, ten junior Ministers were released and among them was Assistant Minister for Information Lekh Ram Vayeshnoi, who confirmed that the Prime Minister was attacked at gun point after his captors feared an imminent raid from sections of the military opposed to the coup (The Fiji Times, 23 May 2000).

An impasse between the coup leader and the hostage negotiators continued as family members of the MPs in captivity were allowed to bring food and clothing. In an interview, the coup leader George Speight highlighted that he was prepared to execute the

hostages if his demands were not met. Negotiations with the coup leader were stagnating and the President of Fiji issued a statement that the coup leader had plans to kill his captors (The Sydney Morning Herald, 30 May 2000). This statement was immediately refuted by George Speight. Ratu Mara in a Presidential decree banned foreign media from conducting further interviews with the Speight group. However, restrictions were eased on 23 May 2000 and journalists were once again able to interview Speight, who blamed the Indo-Fijians for the insecurities of Indigenous Fijians (Associated Press, 31 May 2000).

On 22 May 2000, the Taukei Movement withdrew support for George Speight and in the afternoon of that day, President Ratu Mara cast doubt on the future of Mahendra Chaudhry as the Prime Minister of Fiji, after revealing that he would put alternative government scenarios to the Great Council of Chiefs. On 23 May 2000, the Great Council of Chiefs convened an emergency meeting, where the hostage situation was discussed at length. Meanwhile, the chiefs from the Western Fiji declared in a press statement that they supported the constitutional government of the day (The Great Council of Chiefs Resolutions, 23 May 2000).

As international pressure mounted, the Great Council of Chiefs' Chairman, Sitiveni Rabuka, supported the 1997 Constitution and as a result was accused by the coup leader of negotiating with him in bad faith. It was crucial that the Great Council of Chiefs spoke with a single voice and denounced the illegal takeover. Instead, the chiefs from the eastern part of Fiji supported George Speight. On 23 May 2000, the chiefs deliberated on the political crisis and pledged unanimous support for the President Ratu Mara. Speight

expressed concern at the decision of the chiefs, insisting that the President and the 1997 Constitution had to be removed (National Post, 31 May 2000).

On 25 May 2000, a stalemate was setting in as Indigenous Fijians from nearby villages in Suva convened to offer their support to the coup leader. The Great Council of Chiefs agreed to dismiss the Chaudhry government and set up an interim administration for up to three years to look into ways of changing the 1997 Constitution. After getting almost all his demands, Speight continued his defiance. A delegation from the Great Council of Chiefs met with Speight on 26 May 2000 to end the political crisis. Despite the efforts of the chiefs to accommodate Speight's demands, the political situation continued to deteriorate. On 27 May 2000, a group of Speight supporters stormed a military camp near the parliament and attempted to wrestle weapons away from the soldiers. During the skirmish, two soldiers and an Agence France-Presse (AFP) journalist were injured when Speight's gunmen fired at them. Soon afterwards, the soldiers retreated and the mob looted and uprooted the army camp (PACNEWS, 27 May 2000).

Political tensions remained high throughout Fiji and in the afternoon, the President of Fiji confirmed that he had relieved Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry and appointed Ratu Tevita Momoedonu on grounds that Chaudhry was incapable of carrying out his duties. The actions of the President did not satisfy George Speight whose supporters were planning further criminal activities. In the afternoon of 28 May 2000, Fiji TV analysed the forces behind the 2000 coup and focused on George Speight who was portrayed by the TV program as a person without any history of campaign on Indigenous issues (Fiji TV, 28 May 2000). One of the interviewees on the television program, Jone Dakuvula,

highlighted the role of the chiefs from the provinces of Tailevu and Naitasiri behind the coup. Dakuvula's claims infuriated Speight supporters and as a result a group of 200 Indigenous men attacked and ransacked the television station and shot and killed an Indigenous Fijian policeman.

On 29 May 2000, the President summoned the commander of the Fiji Military Forces Commodore Frank Bainimarama to discuss the deteriorating security around Suva City amid rumours that Speight supporters planned another wave of mob violence. At the meeting, Commodore Bainimarama and his military advisors advised the President that they had intelligence on an imminent threat against him and as a result, the President stepped aside in the evening, allowing Commodore Frank Bainimarama to assume executive authority and declare martial law (BBC, 31 May 2000). Army check points were established throughout Suva and a 24-hour curfew was imposed on the city. On 30 May 2000, negotiations started between representatives of the Fiji Military Forces and George Speight as the military tightened its grip on the city in an effort to restrict the movement of the coup sympathisers.

On the negotiating table were issues around the Council of Advisers, the proposed amnesty and the abrogation of the 1997 Constitution. To appease the coup leader, the army agreed to an amnesty for George Speight and his henchmen and the 1997 Constitution was abrogated by the military (Interim Military Government Decree No. 1). Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, a former army commander and former Fijian ambassador to the United Kingdom, was designated as the interim Prime Minister. In the evening of 30 May



2000, Speight and his supporters were promised immunity from all coup-related prosecution. However, progress in negotiations came to a standstill on 31 May 2000 after George Speight changed his mind and refused to accept the military appointed Prime Minister because he was the son-in-law of President Ratu Mara.

On 30 June 2000, the Financial Review reported that deposed Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry “was seen for the first time” along with 26 other politicians held hostage inside Fiji’s parliament (Financial Review, 30 June 2000). There were also reports that soldiers loyal to the Commodore Frank Bainimarama “had grown frustrated with the stand-off and were eager to retaliate against taunts from within the rebel camp” (The Age, 27 June 2000). As a sign of goodwill, Speight on 25 June 2000, released women hostages including, Adi Koila Nailatikau daughter of President Ratu Mara, Marieta Rigamoto, Lavania Padarath and Akinisi Koroitamana (The Sydney Morning Herald, 26 June 2000).

After 56 days, the remaining hostages were released and the coup leader George Speight and his bodyguard were arrested by the military on 26 July 2000 (Fiji Village News, 26 July 2000). According to Roderic Alley, George Speight and his rebels humiliated the military, divided the Great Council of Chiefs and succeeded in having their own supporters, Ratu Josefa Iloilo and Ratu Jope Seniloli appointed respectively President and Vice President in the interim government (Alley 2001: 515). Not only positioning key supporters in government, the Speight group managed to install an interim Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase, who was sympathetic to the putsch of 2000.

The 2000 coup had a far reaching social impact on Fiji. Concerned Indo-Fijians left for a better future abroad and rural Indo-Fijian villages, including Muaniweni, Dawasamu, Wainibokasi and Dreketi, were targeted by Indigenous nationalists supporting Speight's vision. Case studies on violence against Indo-Fijians by supporters of the George Speight group were conducted by the Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF), the Columban Fathers and the Social Action for Human Rights (SAHARA) organisations in the months of June to August 2000 (SAHARA, August 2000). Further fieldwork was undertaken by the author in December of 2000 in Suva on Indo-Fijian families that fled rural areas after being attacked by Indigenous Fijians. Out of some twenty cases documented, I use three cases to highlight the situation of Indo-Fijians at the height of the inter-group tensions in the year 2000.

#### **5.4 Violence against Indo-Fijians**

Indo-Fijian farmers in the north and west of Fiji were particularly devastated when they were uprooted from homes by organised gangs of Indigenous Fijians, sympathetic to the 2000 coup. In Vanua Levu, most Indo-Fijians I interviewed lived in constant fear and many left their homes to settle with their relatives in Suva or Western Viti Levu. The homes we saw were sealed off with shutters as if the people had no hope of returning. Most of the homes in the eastern parts of Fiji, namely in Batiri and Dreketi had their windows smashed. Walls of some half a dozen homes were destroyed and goods inside looted. One family provided shelter to the supporters of the George Speight group because they were threatened with bodily harm.

Three examples, in the form of personal narratives, from my field work are highlighted to provide the dimension of violence against Indo-Fijians in rural Fiji and the fear of violence in the community in the aftermath of the 2000 coup.

A 53 year old Indo-Fijian woman from Dreketi narrated the following events.

On 29 July 2000, I was sitting with my son under the tree just after lunch when four Indigenous men armed with cane knives came to our house. My son had just arrived from the shop and seeing the armed men, he attempted to secure the family van. Two of the armed men came towards me and ordered me not to move as the other two approached my son. One of the armed men hit my son with the edge of the cane knife and wrestled him to the ground, seizing the keys to the van. My husband, who was inside, rushed out to stop the men from hurting my son. However, he was held to the ground as two armed came inside the house and disconnected the telephone. Two men then took the van and brought some of their other friends from the nearby Fijian village. My son was hurt and I was not allowed to treat him. At 5:30 pm, the armed men ordered me to cook food. As a Muslim family, I was very humiliated since the men had brought pig and killed it in my compound. I was so distressed that I wanted some peace and quiet to pray but that was refused. The next morning the men left but my son was still hurt from the injuries. Fortunately, they had left the van behind and we left for the hospital for treatment. On the way, a group of Indigenous men had erected a roadblock and we were stopped and turned back despite my pleading with the men to allow passage. We had to return and I had to seek some medicine from my neighbours to treat my son because his wound was getting worse.

A 67 old Indo-Fijian man in Seaqaqa provided me with information on his personal experience.

On 31 July 2000 at about 7:30 pm, we were sitting down in the living room and having a chat with members of the family about the deteriorating political situation in the country. Some ten Indigenous Fijian men wearing masks and armed with sticks suddenly barged in and broke all the windows. They threatened to burn down the house and then disconnected the water meter. Five men held my 33 year old son and punched and kicked him repeatedly yelling that it was time for all of us to leave. The rest of the family members got very frightened and hid inside a room but the men pursued us and one of them punched and kicked me and the other pulled a knife and threatened to decapitate my wife. Blood was oozing from my son's face and my nose was broken. The men then ransacked the house, stole my wife's jewellery and then escaped into the darkness.

A 50 year old Indo-Fijian man in Nawai continued the tale of violence and fear of violence in the Indo-Fijian community.

On 1 August 2000, at 12 noon, 30 Indigenous Fijian men armed with knives and some with guns came and took possession of our van. Seeing the men, we fled into the jungle. At 4 am the next day, we came back to the house and heard from other Indo-Fijian neighbours that the gang of men had stolen their live stocks. An Indigenous Fijian benefactor told all Indo-Fijians living in the area to gather in one place so that he could arrange a transport to a safe haven. While this arrangement was taking place, the armed men from the previous day returned and started attacking us. We then had to flee back into the jungle and run for our lives because the men had guns and were shooting at us.

About six men were after us, including the one with a gun. We ran to a school and sought refuge there. In the event my six family members were injured. There were some 200 Indo-Fijian families sleeping at the school for a week. Some were so frightened that they were sleeping in the jungle fearing attack on the school. There were no police or military to provide any protection or assistance.

These stories of violence were narrated in detail. At least three homes were burnt as Indo-Fijian settlements in Dawasamu, Lawaki, Deep Water, Waidalice, Batiri and Seaqaqa came under direct attack from the supporters of George Speight. The interim government that was installed by the military chose to ignore the plight of Indo-Fijians and instead supported the ideas of the coup leaders. Even the Great Council of Chiefs, the body that exercises traditional authority over all of Indigenous Fijians, was not committed to ending the violence against Indo-Fijians, instead it requested that Britain take responsibility and remove Indo-Fijians from the country.

Coup leader George Speight made a number of claims against the 1997 Constitution and against Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry. These claims were not only used as justification for the coup but also as justifications for violence against the Indo-Fijian community in general. These claims are discussed at length below.

## **5.5 Justifications for the Violence**

Coup leader George Speight (2001: 147-153) asserted that the 1997 Constitution failed Indigenous Fijians. The review of the 1990 Constitution was instigated by former Prime

Minister Sitiveni Rabuka in 1993. In June 1997, Indigenous Fijian members of both Houses voted unanimously in favour of the new constitution. The Great Council of Chiefs on 7 June 1997 fully endorsed the constitutional amendments as a way forward for a multiracial Fiji. Some Indigenous Fijian provinces did not support the constitutional compromise, but its representatives in parliament voted in favour of change. In total 67 members from Government and Opposition endorsed the 1997 Constitution Amendment Bill. It should be noted that at a SVT caucus meeting on 20 June 1997, former Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka allowed for a conscience vote by all SVT MPs on the changes to the constitution. Following a vote in the Parliament and the Senate, there were no public protests, only murmurs of dissent from Sakeasi Butadroka and Iliesa Duvuloco and his nationalist friends who constituted a small minority within the Indigenous population. It was clear from the very outset that under the new constitution anyone, regardless of their ethnicity, could become the Prime Minister. Subsequently, Mahendra Chaudhry became the first Indo-Fijian Prime Minister of Fiji following the general election in 1999.

George Speight claimed that despite winning 38 per cent of Indigenous Fijian votes, the SVT was not part of the Chaudhry-led Cabinet. However, following the general elections of May 1999, Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry invited SVT to join the government. Unfortunately, the SVT leader, Sitiveni Rabuka, embittered by the defeat at the polls, suggested that the party be given the position of the Deputy Prime Minister and one other key ministry. This was clearly unacceptable when a majority of Indigenous Fijian votes went to the Fijian Association Party. The Prime Minister had to give priority to its

existing Indigenous Fijian coalition partners-the Fijian Association Party and the Party of National Unity-which was party to a memorandum of understanding dated 12 August 1998. The 1999 election result showed that the Fijian Association Party and the Party of National Unity (PANU) received the highest percentage of Indigenous Fijian votes. It also was clear that the SVT had strongholds only in Suva, Tailevu, Kadavu and Cakaudrove but were dumped by Indigenous voters elsewhere. In order to achieve ethnic balance, Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry gave a majority of cabinet positions to Indigenous Fijians (11 out of 16) and successfully invited VLV to join the government.

Next, Speight accused Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry of formulating policies that undermined Indigenous Fijian tradition. The Peoples' Coalition government argued for an agreement on the expiration of Agricultural Landlord and Tenants Act (ALTA); the establishment of the Land Use Commission to empower Indigenous Fijians towards making commercial decisions; an arrangement with international consortium for a mahogany deal that provided sound return to Indigenous owners; changes to NLTB Act; and constitutional amendments to enable Indigenous Fijians to hold dual offices. For Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry, a possible solution was to formulate a new land legislation that benefited both the Indigenous Fijian landowners and Indo-Fijian tenants. At the Great Council of Chief (GCC) meeting on 26-28 April 2000, the issue was referred to the Native Land Trust Board (NLTB), which held discussions. It was noted that the NLTB remained steadfast in its position to bring all agricultural leases under NLTA while the government pursued a new legislation. Despite the stalemate, it was not possible for the government to pass any successor legislation to ALTA without getting

the support of the Great Council of Chiefs. Under the 1997 Constitution any legislation on Indigenous Fijian land could not be passed unless supported by 9 out of the 14 Great Council of Chiefs nominees in the Senate.

The justifications for the May 2000 coup do not hold up to scrutiny as the actions of the coup makers were rather aimed at exploiting racial biases and prejudices to engineer an Indigenous power clique. Moreover, an over-emphasis on the inter-group conflict (Lawson 2005: 206) was aimed at masking the destructive Indigenous in-group struggles for power between the chiefs of Bau and Lau. The coup would nevertheless set the stage for racially divisive elections in 2001 and 2006 and intensification of Indigenous in-group conflict resulting in yet another military coup.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

Similar to the 1987 coups, the 2000 coup was a continuation of the Indigenous nationalist agenda as lack of inter-group contact fuelled racial hatred, escalating into racial violence. Despite the multiracial 1997 Constitution, racial prejudices remained and Indigenous nationalists were quickly angered by the Peoples' Coalition Government leading to the re-invention of the nationalist Taukei Movement, which held public demonstrations. A section of the Indigenous nationalist community seized on the growing Indigenous frustration against government policies and abducted government ministers on 19 May 2000. The 2000 coup was different from its 1987 predecessor because of structured physical violence against the Indo-Fijian community. Coup leader George Speight



provided the justifications for the violence but on a closer analysis none of his claims held up to scrutiny. As a result of the coup and the violence, inter-group conflict between the two communities escalated strengthening in-group solidarity and this is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 6: The 2006 General Election-Establishing In-group Solidarity**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The 2006 election reflected inter-group fault lines which were sharpened by exclusive nationalist policies of the SDL party in Fiji. The Indo-Fijian dominated Fiji Labour Party challenged the Indigenous government's policies in parliament, and debates on social and economic issues deteriorated into verbal racial attacks (Mausio 2003). The politics of Fiji between 2001 and 2006 were characterised by litigations over multiparty government and ethnic vilifications unprecedented in post-independence politics in Fiji. As a result, there was strengthening of in-group ties among both Indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians.

Fiji went to the polls in August 2001 as George Speight cast a long shadow over the election campaign. Brij Lal notes that: "Fijian political parties competed with each other to court his supporters, promising to fulfil his agenda of enshrining Fijian political control in perpetuity" (Lal 2002: 87). According to Robert Stockwell (2005: 388), the election gave victory to a "Fijian ethno-nationalist party, which was dedicated to maintaining Indigenous control over government and entrenching Fijian paramountcy". By 2003, differences between the army commander Commodore Frank Bainimarama and the government of Laisenia Qarase became public after it was alleged by the army that the government wanted to replace the commander with an appointee from overseas. Worse, the government intervened on behalf of the chiefs convicted for their role in the 2000 coup. Former Vice President Ratu Jope Seniloli, former Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu and the SDL appointed Senator Ratu Josefa Dimuri

were convicted of coup related offences but released on compulsory supervision following the intervention of the SDL government (Ramesh 2006). According to John Connell:

The continued ramifications of the 2000 coup are evident in court cases, fear of a further coup, continued discussions over the fate of coup leader George Speight, and uncertainty over the role of Indo-Fijians in the evolving political system. This has been complicated by concern over corruption in the banking system, judiciary, government and police force. Several such problems are similarly bound up with issues of ethnicity (Connell 2007: 86-87).

According to the Fiji Sun, the Qarase government within six years after the May 2000 coup implemented racially discriminatory legislations and refused to work with the opposition in finding a solution to the expiring sugar leases under the Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Act (ALTA), which could only be amended by a two-thirds majority in the House of Representatives and the Senate (The Fiji Sun, 18 February 2005). Robertson and Sutherland emphasised that nepotism, cronyism and colonial style command structures in Fiji disregard transparency, dialogue and accountability and propose an outcomes based policy framework for Indigenous development with specific performance indicators, timeframes and audit requirements (Robertson & Sutherland 2001: 124). However, the Qarase government was not transparent and worse it had squandered thirty million dollars in 2001 to provide farm equipment in areas that had supported the May 2000 takeover. Moreover, the SDL established a commercial arm of the party and provided government contracts to its political contributors. Such corrupt

practices prompted heated debates in parliament as the SDL routinely diverted opposition queries by playing the race card. Steven Ratuva noted in October 2002 that in Fiji continued interethnic suspicion helped to widen the ethnic gap but the political situation was worsened by continuing power struggle over leadership (Ratuva 2002: 22).

Fiji went to the polls from 6 to 13 May 2006 to elect a government under an electoral system, introduced by the Constitutional Amendment Act of 1997, which hoped to move the island nation from runaway communalism to inter-communal bargaining and coalitions. However, unlike any other general election in post-independence Fiji, the 2006 elections was most divisive as various ethnic groups rallied behind their own communal parties. The Indo-Fijians were solidly behind the Fiji Labour Party (FLP) whereas the Indigenous Fijians voted in large numbers for the Soqosoqo ni Duavata ni Lewenivanua party (SDL). The New Alliance Party of Fiji (NAPF) and the National Federation Party (NFP), which advocated policies that were in between those of the FLP and the SDL, failed to win a single seat. According to Steven Ratuva (2007: 44), the active participation of the military in the election campaign against the SDL party may have “driven Indo-Fijians into the FLP camp-as they felt confident that the military would provide them with security if the FLP won, and driven Indigenous Fijians towards SDL as they felt alienated and threatened by the military’s perceived alignment with the FLP”.

## **6.2 The 2006 Election: Major Political Parties and Voting**

The political campaign of the various parties reflected the ethnic and cultural polarisation which in turn reflected the final result of the 2006 general election. Moreover, in-group solidarity featured prominently during the election. Indo-Fijians were driven by the concern of continued state-based discrimination if the Indigenous nationalist won government. Indigenous Fijians went to the polls fearful of Indo-Fijian political ascendancy, which had the potential to reverse the affirmative action programs of the nationalist SDL Government from 2001 to 2006 (The Fiji Sun, 18 February 2005).

There were a number of parties contesting the Fiji elections and among them were the SDL, FLP, NFP, NAPF, Girit Heritage Party (GHP), Soqosoqo ni Vakevulewa ni Taukei Party (SVT), Party of Truth (POT), Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), Vanua Tako Lavu Party (NVTLP), Coalition of Independent Nationals (COIN), and Coalition of Independent Conservatives (COIC). The two major parties, the SDL and the FLP, manifestos are stated below in detail and these reflect the communal in-group positioning aimed at cementing in-group solidarity among voters.

One of the major Indigenous Fijian nationalist political parties, the Soqosoqo ni Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL) Party, was formed in 2001 following the High Court judgment that restored the 1997 Constitution and the cabinet that was deposed by the George Speight led coup of 19 May 2000. The SDL was led by Suva businessman Laisenia Qarase, who successfully formed the government following the 2001 general elections and implemented social justice programmes for Indigenous Fijians under the affirmative

action framework. The party was also instrumental in introducing the Racial Tolerance and Unity Bill (RTU) in June 2005, which created an atmosphere of unease between the government and the military. The SDL participated in the 2006 election with the theme “Secure our Future.” The underlying message was that non-Indigenous Fijians would be best served by Indigenous Fijian political leaders and that security of the nation, and in particular of the Indo-Fijians, was premised upon the recognition of Indigenous political paramountcy. This strategy was ill-conceived because the actions of the supporters of the George Speight group were still fresh in the minds of Indo-Fijians who saw the SDL nationalist policies as state-led appeasement of Indigenous Fijians involved in racial violence against Indo-Fijians in 2000

According to the SDL manifesto, there was a five year plan for the sugar industry, which was compromised following a wave of non-renewal of sugar leases by Indigenous landowners who supported the 2000 coup. The government argued for completion of all reforms in the sugar industry for the production of quality sugar cane and more efficient milling and farming; improved income for farmers through higher productivity and expanded crops; Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC) to become producer of energy (ethanol) as well as sugar, to lift its income; alternative livelihood project for farmers, villagers and others in the sugar cane areas; continuation of assistance schemes for incoming and outgoing farmers in sugar cane regions; and flood protection through land drainage, river dredging and retention dams (Soqosoqo ni Duavata ni Lewenivanua Party Election Manifesto, 2006).

The more contentious affirmative action program was strengthened in the SDL election manifesto. Affirmative action was not meant to be permanent but the government argued that preferential treatment of Indigenous Fijians would continue until discrimination was removed, equality of opportunity achieved, and the burden of poverty for the disadvantaged lessened. The SDL believed that it would take at least 20 years to close the gap between Indigenous Fijians and the rest of the population (Soqosoqo ni Duavata ni Lewenivanua Party Election Manifesto, 2006).

Affordable housing was a high priority for the SDL. The party advocated a new Housing Authority target of financing three thousand low-cost homes annually in different parts of the country; increased funding for squatter resettlement at least \$5 million a year to assist approximately a thousand families; a complete review of squatter policies; and continuation of Rural Housing Scheme. Closely associated with housing was a poverty action plan for the next five years. The SDL pledged to continue efforts to reduce poverty; provide support for income ventures for youths and ex-prisoners; improve the economy and the law and order situation by initiating major projects for reform and modernisation, including acquisition of additional specialist support for law enforcement. In education, the party advocated a possible subsidy for the cost of text books, work books, and reducing school bus fees; partnership with European Union to improve rural education; development of teacher and leadership training; enhancing curriculum development to reflect needs of multicultural nation; and celebration of national education week. For the health sector, the government proposed new hospital for Ba and Nausori; completion of extension at Labasa hospital; extension of Korovou hospital; new

health centres and nursing stations; renewed effort to lift customer service standards and reduce delays; more active approach in primary and preventive health care; funding to combat AIDS/HIV; and encouraging more private sector investment in health (Soqosoqo ni Duavata ni Lewenivanua Party Election Manifesto, 2006).

The other major party contesting the 2006 general election was the Indo-Fijian dominated Fiji Labour Party, which was formed in 1985 by trade unionists concerned with the Indigenous government's structural adjustments, wage freezes and corruption. The party won the April 1987 election by forming cross-cultural class-based coalitions but was ousted in a military coup on 14 May 1987 by military strong man Sitiveni Rabuka. After the promulgation of the new constitution in 1997, the party was re-energised and it won an absolute majority in the May 1999 elections. A year later, the FLP government was deposed by Indigenous nationalists. In 2006, the FLP was vocal in protesting against the RTU and corruption in the SDL government (The Fiji Times, 15 April 2005). Before the election, the FLP alleged that the SDL had provided fibre glass boats and cash to secure Indigenous votes and went into the election with the theme "Change the Future". The FLP wanted more cross-cultural collaboration and in its manifesto recognised the special cultural position of Indigenous Fijians and their unique developmental needs (Fiji Labour Party 2006 Election Manifesto).

In its election manifesto, the Fiji Labour Party promised to tackle poverty head on by creating a socially just and prosperous society through jobs, social welfare and education. Labour promised to introduce old age pension for those over 60, introduce medicare-a



national health insurance scheme to enable poor to access quality health; review the state welfare allowance payment criteria and increase the rates of allowance; provide state assisted housing to the needy; establish price surveillance on essential consumer items; and create income earning opportunities by developing cottage industries in the rural and per-urban areas through micro-finance schemes (Fiji Labour Party 2006 Election Manifesto).

Labour believed that Fiji citizens deserved high quality health care. In response, the party promised to introduce a national medicare scheme through the Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF); put hospital management under public-private partnership arrangement; remedy doctor shortages by working in consultation with donor countries like Australia, New Zealand, India and the United States; prevent lifestyle diseases by raising public awareness on health living practices; improve patient data collection by introducing computerised patient record systems; and promote annual health checks for all Fiji citizens (Fiji Labour Party 2006 Election Manifesto).

For the education sector, Labour pledged to restore and raise the per capita education grant; introduce an annual back to school allowance of \$70 per child in primary school and \$120 per child in secondary schools; provide fee- free education to all Form 7 students; reduce the cost of text books by implementing a text book hire scheme; reduce school bus fares; restore student loan schemes; focus on helping Indigenous Fijian students via a special unit in the Ministry of Education (Fiji Labour Party 2006 Election Manifesto).

Indigenous nationalist abrogation of sugar leases held by Indo-Fijians had a profound impact on the Indo-Fijian community from 2000 to 2006. The Fiji Labour Party through its sugar union arm the National Farmers Union (NFU) was instrumental in resettling Indo-Fijian farmers and continued to agitate for greater investment into the sector from the government. As a result, the sugar industry continued to receive special attention by the FLP, which planned to maintain the income of the farmers through a productivity based incentive scheme against cane price reductions; subsidise the cost of farm inputs such as fertilisers, chemicals and farm machinery; initiate crop rehabilitation and development programmes; pay resettlement grants to farmers whose leases are not renewed; ensure quality cane payment system; abolish sugar export tax; undertake a comprehensive study of the current harvesting and transportation system; reform Sugar Cane Growers Council; re-examine the current industry restructure plans; and use the Alternative Livelihood Programme to develop new industries in rural areas. In the agricultural sector, Labour sought to invest in infrastructure such as irrigation and drainage systems; promote agricultural exports across a wide range of products; and establish industry bodies with strong farmer participation to expand exports of taro, yagona, tropical fruits and vegetables. The FLP, in its party manifesto, argued that problems of the Indigenous community have to be addressed through an integrated approach in each of the following socio-economic sectors: education, tourism, rural development, economy and natural resources. The FLP promised to bring Indigenous Fijians into the mainstream of commerce through sustainable development of their resources (Fiji Labour Party 2006 Election Manifesto).

The history of the voting week is particularly important to the history of the 2006 general election because it demonstrated failures on the part of the Indigenous Fijian government and the Fiji Elections Office to establish proper electoral processes and governance, raising concerns among Indo-Fijians that the election was manipulated (Ramesh 2007a).

Fiji citizens went to the poll on 6 May 2006. There were 2000 election officials posted in the Western Division with a little over 325 officials sent to Bua in eastern Fiji. The Supervisor of Elections, Semesa Karavaki, on 5 May 2006 warned voters to refrain from engaging in any unlawful activities during the election process (The Daily Post, 6 May 2006). Karavaki further assured the nation that the Elections Office had adequately resourced all polling stations in anticipation of a problem free election day. Despite the Supervisor of Elections assurances, the election process turned out to be a challenge (The Daily Post, 7 May 2006). A number of voters waited from 7am in the morning around various polling stations as elections officials struggled to get organised. At the Sabeto Primary School in Nadi, the elections officials did not arrive until 10:30 am and at Kalabu Fijian School near Suva, voters had to wait until 1 pm before getting an opportunity to cast their votes. According to the Sunday Times, “in 32 polling stations in Suva and Lautoka, polling was delayed by as much as six hours due to a shortage of ballot papers and when the papers finally arrived, some were still missing, causing confusion and frustration among voters” (The Sunday Times, 7 May 2006).

The Supervisor of Elections, Semesa Karavaki, was interviewed on Fiji One television on 7 May 2006 on the problems at the polling booths. Karavaki assured the nation that there

would be no more problems from 8 May 2006. Besides concerned local voters, the former United States Ambassador to Fiji, Larry Dinger, raised concern over missing voter names from electoral rolls at some polling stations. Ambassador Dinger reported that “he was concerned about voters who have been registered but their names were not on the voting rolls” (The Daily Post, 9 May 2006). In response, the Returning Officer Western, Savenaca Kaunisela, assured that all eligible voters could cast their votes even though their names did not appear on the electoral rolls. However, more voters were forced to return without casting their ballot on 8 May 2006. At Dilkusha polling station in Suva presiding electoral officer, Peniasi Naqau, had to turn away some 15 per cent of the voters whose names could not be found on the electoral roll (The Fiji Times, 9 May 2006).

The FLP and the United Peoples’ Party (UPP) accused the Elections Office of fraud after the Labour leader Mahendra Chaudhry alleged that additional ballot papers were printed for certain constituencies, including the constituency in which he was contesting: the Ba Open seat. Chaudhry alleged that more than 9,000 ballot papers were produced in excess and it was done deliberately to undermine his chance for re-election. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase acknowledged that the Elections Office was inadequately resourced and that he would seriously look at the issue after the election. The FLP further alleged that the Supervisor of Elections employed more Indigenous Fijian polling agents to scuttle any meaningful oversight from Indo-Fijians. The FLP’s claims were given some context when it was revealed on 10 May 2006 that some ballot boxes, transported

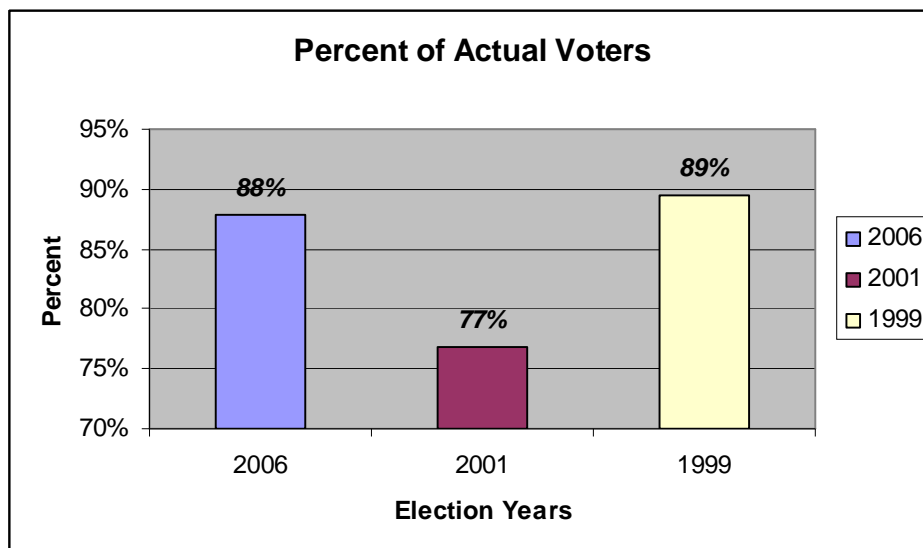
from Suva to Nadi, were without proper police supervision in direct contravention of Fiji's 1996 Electoral Act (Fiji Sun, 10 May 2006).

On the fifth day of polling, five disgruntled voters staged a protest outside a polling station in Ba. Five supporters of the FLP marched along a public road carrying party banners, calling for the immediate resignation of the Supervisor of Elections. All of the protestors were later charged with unlawful assembly (The Daily Post 12 May 2006). The Fiji Sun editorial the next day remarked that there was something deeply distasteful about an organised public protest during an election and accused the FLP of maligning the Elections Office for political mileage. On the final day of voting on 13 May, it became evident from reports from various polling stations across Fiji that Indigenous Fijians had come out in greater numbers to vote for the SDL. According to The Fiji Times, Indigenous Fijian voters in rural areas turned up to vote in unprecedented numbers, compared to previous general election in 2001 (The Fiji Times, 13 May 2006).

By the close of polling, Elections Office estimated that some 60 per cent of voters had cast their votes, but this figure was a preliminary one and the final result indicated that Fiji citizens responded positively to the number of advertisements on television, radio and newspapers requesting voters to exercise their democratic right. A three second advertisement on Fiji One television advised voters on how to vote in what often was seen as an overly "complicated" voting system. Each individual voter in Fiji had two votes-one for the communal and the other for open constituency and a valid ballot required voters to either vote "above the line" or "below" but not both as mandated by the

Electoral Act of 1996. All political parties at their party sheds near polling stations advised voters to vote above the line, thus locking the voter in the party's preference arrangement.

**Table 2: Comparative Voter Turnout in Fiji Elections 1999-2006**



(Source: Fiji Elections Office)

According to the Fiji Elections Office, voter turnout for the 2006 election nearly matched that of 1999 when the FLP won an absolute majority (Fiji Elections Office, 2006). The other reason for the high turnout was the fear among Indigenous Fijians that there was a possibility that the SDL party could be defeated following the registration of a large number of Indigenous Fijian parties, some of which were in partnership with the FLP. The other factor that influenced voter turnout was the way in which preferences were distributed. There was tendency towards larger political parties to share preferences with the smaller ones and vice versa. However, Indigenous nationalist parties ensured that

their preferences were distributed within the Indigenous parties (Fiji Elections Office, 2006).

### 6.3 The Election Result

On 14 May 2006, various party officers started work on verifying postal ballot. The task was supposed to start at 10:00am at various counting stations but long delays were encountered. At Natabua polling station in Lautoka, postal ballot count did not start until 8 pm in the evening. Police and the military were closely monitoring the situation in the country and military spokesperson, Capitan Neumi Leweni, confirmed that soldiers were on a stand-by to help police during an unexpected political emergency (The Fiji Times, 14 May 2006). The count of the votes started slowly on 15 May 2006 and was concluded on 18 May 2006. Communal and cultural allegiance dominated the result with Indigenous Fijians voting in favour of the SDL while Indo-Fijians chose the FLP.

The final election results were as follows:

**Table 3: 2006 Fiji General Election Result**

| PARTY        | GENERAL  | FIJIAN    | INDIAN    | OPEN      | TOTAL     | %           |
|--------------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| SDL          | 0        | 23        | 0         | 13        | 36        | 51%         |
| FLP          | 0        | 0         | 19        | 12        | 31        | 44%         |
| UPP          | 2        | 0         | 0         | 0         | 2         | 2.5%        |
| INDEPENDENT  | 2        | 0         | 0         | 0         | 2         | 2.5%        |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>23</b> | <b>19</b> | <b>25</b> | <b>71</b> | <b>100%</b> |

(Source: Fiji Elections Office)

Compared with the 2001 general elections, the FLP improved its percentage of total seats from 39 per cent to 44 percent. The SDL also improved its overall standing from the previous election from 45 per cent to 51 per cent. However, it should be noted that the

increase in the SDL vote share was partly due to the party absorbing the Conservative Alliance Matanitu Vanua party (CAMV), which supported George Speight and was reportedly behind the controversial Racial Tolerance and Unity Bill that granted immunity to the 2000 coup leaders. Support for the CAMV was particularly strong in Vanua Levu and in the villages of Naitasiri and Tailevu in Central and Eastern Fiji.

According to Table 4, the FLP dominated Indo-Fijian communal constituencies polling on average 81 per cent of Indo-Fijian votes. The closest rival, the National Federation Party (NFP), polled an average of 15.1 per cent. Compared with 1999, 2001 and 2006, NFP's share of Indo-Fijian votes continued to decline, despite fielding well known candidates in the Ba West and the Nadi Urban constituencies. The FLP went into the campaign united in its vision for promoting multicultural Fiji and an egalitarian society. Under the leadership of Mahendra Chaudhry, the party rejected the reconciliation efforts of the SDL and wanted better outcomes for Fiji's sugar farmers following liberalisation of sugar prices. The party also emphasised that in the five years of SDL government, corruption was rife in the public service, special interest groups such as the Methodist Church of Fiji had influenced public policy and the nation was spending beyond its means. During the campaign, the FLP emphasised that the SDL had increased the Value Added Tax (VAT) from 12.5 per cent to 15 per cent thereby making the social situation harder for the under-privileged. The NFP was critical of the FLP leadership but failed to provide any concrete vision for the future of the country. Worse the NFP decided to mix its preferences by assigning some preferences to the FLP while others to the SDL, raising concerns among Indo-Fijian voters on the party's political position.



**Table 4: Comparison of Indo-Fijian Communal Seats-2006 vs 2001**

| Communal Constituencies        | 2001         | 2001         | 2006         | 2006         | 06 vs 01    | 06 vs 01     |
|--------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
|                                | FLP          | NFP          | FLP          | NFP          | FLP         | NFP          |
| Viti Levu East Maritime Indian | 66.5%        | 24.3%        | 78.4%        | 15.6%        | 11.9%       | -8.7%        |
| Tavua Indian                   | 76.2%        | 20.0%        | 79.5%        | 18.5%        | 3.3%        | -1.5%        |
| Ba East Indian                 | 71.5%        | 28.6%        | 72.2%        | 27.3%        | 0.7%        | -1.3%        |
| Ba West Indian                 | 70.6%        | 27.6%        | 87.3%        | 10.5%        | 16.8%       | -17.1%       |
| Lautoka Rural                  | 71.1%        | 28.7%        | 77.2%        | 18.6%        | 6.1%        | -10.2%       |
| Lautoka City Indian            | 72.5%        | 23.1%        | 79.9%        | 16.7%        | 7.4%        | -6.5%        |
| Vuda Indian                    | 79.8%        | 17.5%        | 85.1%        | 8.9%         | 5.4%        | -8.6%        |
| Nadi Urban Indian              | 68.6%        | 29.5%        | 76.0%        | 20.2%        | 7.5%        | -9.3%        |
| Nadi Rural Indian              | 68.8%        | 29.5%        | 71.9%        | 26.6%        | 3.1%        | -2.9%        |
| Nadroga Indian                 | 71.3%        | 24.2%        | 81.0%        | 24.2%        | 9.8%        | 0.0%         |
| Viti Levu South/Kadavu Indian  | 73.5%        | 23.0%        | 82.0%        | 12.9%        | 8.4%        | -10.1%       |
| Suva City Indian               | 74.7%        | 21.8%        | 77.3%        | 16.9%        | 2.7%        | -4.9%        |
| Vanua Levu West Indian         | 65.2%        | 26.6%        | 73.8%        | 10.7%        | 8.6%        | -15.9%       |
| Laucala Indian                 | 87.3%        | 10.8%        | 89.4%        | 5.6%         | 2.2%        | -5.2%        |
| Nasinu Indian                  | 84.5%        | 14.0%        | 90.9%        | 5.1%         | 6.4%        | -8.9%        |
| Tailevu/Rewa Indian            | 75.5%        | 22.9%        | 86.9%        | 10.4%        | 11.4%       | -12.5%       |
| Labasa Indian                  | 73.8%        | 19.2%        | 84.1%        | 14.0%        | 10.3%       | -5.2%        |
| Labasa Rural Indian            | 83.1%        | 12.7%        | 83.2%        | 14.7%        | 0.1%        | 2.0%         |
| Macuata East Cakaudrove Indian | 75.5%        | 20.4%        | 83.3%        | 9.9%         | 7.8%        | -10.5%       |
| <b>Indian Communal Average</b> | <b>74.2%</b> | <b>22.3%</b> | <b>81.0%</b> | <b>15.1%</b> | <b>6.8%</b> | <b>-7.2%</b> |

(Source: Fiji Elections Office)

A closer analysis of the Indo-Fijian communal seats indicates that NFP's support remained steady only in Nadroga and that the FLP increased its support among Indo-Fijians in all communal seats with the highest swing recorded in the Ba West Indian seat. An average overall gain for the FLP was 6.8 per cent with the NFP reporting a net decline of 7.2 per cent over the 2001 election result. The SDL support in the Indo-Fijian communal seat was 2.1 per cent with the highest proportion of votes received for the SDL was 5.3 per cent for the Nadroga Indian communal seat. Nadroga has a stronger inter-cultural contact and many Indo-Fijians in the province are well versed in the Indigenous dialect and culture. As a result, the SDL had a better electoral outcome in the Nadroga seat.

In the 2001 general elections, the CAMV and the SVT provided strong competition to the SDL in a number of Indigenous communal seats. However, with the amalgamation of CAMV with SDL and the disappearance of the SVT from the Indigenous Fijian communal scene, the SDL increased its support among the Indigenous Fijians from 54.9 per cent in 2001 to 80.3 per cent in 2006.

**Table 5: Comparison of SDL's share of Indigenous Fijian Votes-2006 vs 2001**

| <b>Fijian Communal Seats</b>   |              |              |                   |
|--------------------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
| <b>SDL</b>                     | <b>2001</b>  | <b>2006</b>  | <b>% Increase</b> |
| Bua Fijian*                    | 38.9%        | 80.7%        | 41.7%             |
| Kadavu Fijian                  | 55.4%        | 74.4%        | 19.1%             |
| Lau Fijian                     | 91.5%        | 93.3%        | 1.9%              |
| Lomaiviti Fijian               | 72.3%        | 82.3%        | 10.0%             |
| Macuata Fijian*                | 38.7%        | 86.8%        | 48.2%             |
| Nadroga/Navosa Fijian          | 53.2%        | 71.6%        | 18.3%             |
| Naitasiri Fijian               | 75.6%        | 84.1%        | 8.5%              |
| Namosi Fijian                  | 85.5%        | 89.1%        | 3.6%              |
| Ra Fijian                      | 51.2%        | 76.3%        | 25.1%             |
| Rewa Fijian                    | 51.4%        | 56.4%        | 5.0%              |
| Serua Fijian                   | 62.6%        | 77.5%        | 14.9%             |
| Ba East Fijian                 | 58.7%        | 60.4%        | 1.8%              |
| Ba West Fijian                 | 60.1%        | 80.1%        | 19.9%             |
| Tailevu North Fijian*          | 36.0%        | 81.3%        | 45.3%             |
| Tailevu South Fijian           | 50.2%        | 80.8%        | 30.6%             |
| Cakaudrove East Fijian*        | 14.1%        | 88.9%        | 74.8%             |
| Cakaudrove West Fijian*        | 0.0%         | 90.1%        | 90.1%             |
| North East Urban Fijian        | 53.8%        | 84.6%        | 30.8%             |
| North West Urban Fijian        | 68.4%        | 79.0%        | 10.6%             |
| South West Fijian              | 61.8%        | 86.4%        | 24.6%             |
| Suva City Urban Fijian         | 55.8%        | 73.0%        | 17.3%             |
| Tamavua/Laucala Fijian         | 61.2%        | 84.9%        | 23.8%             |
| Nasinu Urban Fijian            | 65.7%        | 84.9%        | 19.2%             |
| <b>Fijian Communal Average</b> | <b>54.9%</b> | <b>80.3%</b> | <b>25.4%</b>      |

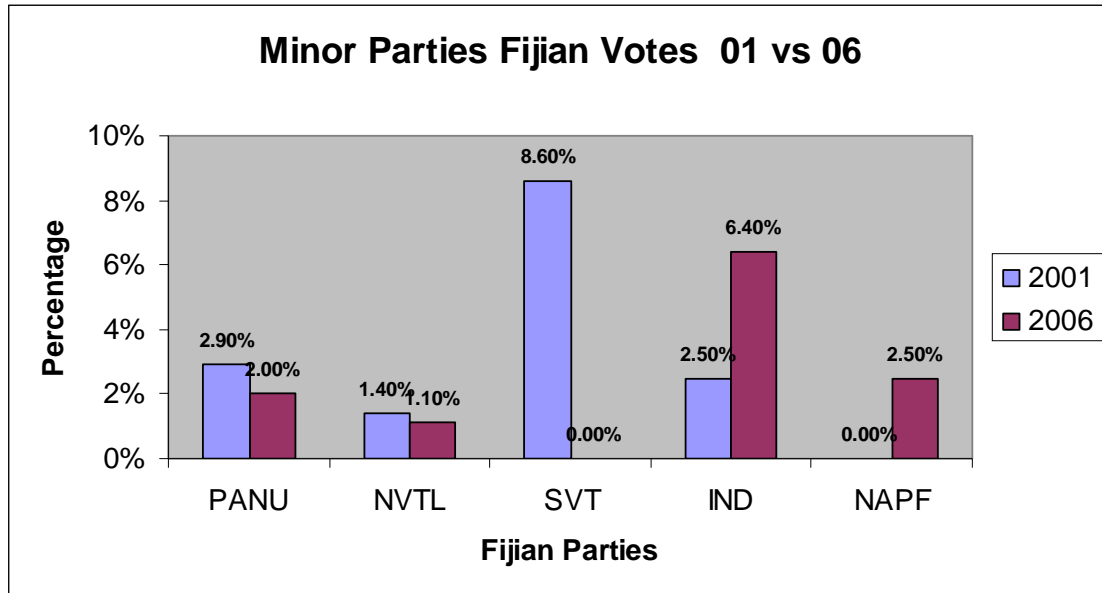
\* Seats won in 2001 by Conservative Alliance Matanitu

(Source: Fiji Elections Office)

According to Table 5, the SDL increased its share of Indigenous Fijian votes across all Indigenous communal constituencies with the highest swing recorded in the Cakaudrove West Fijian seat, which was held by CAMV candidate, Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure in the 2001 general election. Nationalist Vanua Tako Lavu Party (NVTLP) and independent Indigenous candidates failed to win any seats. In fact, the NVLTP's share of the Indigenous Fijian vote declined from 1.4 per cent in 2001 to 1.1 per cent in 2006. The FLP's partner, the Party of National Unity (PANU), also registered a decline from 2.9 per cent in 2001 to 2 per cent in 2006 (see Table 6). Samisoni Pareti and Jon Fraenkel (2007: 92) noted that "the predicted splitting of Indigenous Fijian votes arising from the emergence of many Indigenous parties did not happen" and communal blocs were largely preserved, highlighting Fiji's ethnic division.

Moreover, the SVT did not receive a single Indigenous vote because it did not field any Indigenous contestants in any Indigenous communal seats in 2006. However, in 2001, the SVT polled a total of 8.6 per cent of the Indigenous Fijian votes. Independent candidates standing in Indigenous communal seats increased their share of votes from 2.5 per cent in 2001 to 6.4 per cent in 2006, while the NAPF managed to get only 2.5 per cent of Indigenous votes.

**Table 6: Minor Indigenous Fijian Parties Performance-2006 vs 2001**



(Source: Fiji Elections Office)

The support for the FLP in the Indigenous Fijian communal seat was on average 7.5 per cent with the highest percentage of FLP votes recorded for Nadroga Navosa Fijian communal seat at 17 per cent. The 25 open seats or non-communal general seats were supposed to encourage cross-cultural collaboration and inter-group contact under the new electoral arrangement introduced after 1997. However, evidence from the three post-1997 elections indicates that ethnic and culturally exclusive voting patterns continued unabated (see Table 7). Despite this trend, there was evidence following the 2006 election that open seats determined by preferences had inter-group vote flows. It is, therefore, important to examine the details surrounding the open seats because on the face of it, these seats were pivotal in fostering inter-ethnic accommodation (Horowitz 2007).

Out of the 25 open constituencies, 13 were dominated by Indigenous Fijians whereas the remaining 12 by Indo-Fijians and following the decline in sugar farming since 2000, a large number of Indo-Fijians have moved from Vanua Levu to Suva, providing electoral advantage in mainly open urban seats to the FLP. Worse perhaps, in the absence of an updated census, the electoral boundaries determined under the Electoral Act did not reflect the changes in demographics since 1996 and this was one of the concerns of the FLP as well as the Fiji military. The SVT had only one candidate, Arvind Deo Singh, contesting the Nadi Open seat, which was won by the NFP in 2001 general elections. As stated earlier, the NFP chose to mix and match its preference allocations and in most open seats, like Nadi, it chose independents over the SDL and the FLP while in others its preferences went to the Indigenous Fijian nationalist parties (Fiji Village News, 21 April 2006). The result was that both the SDL and the FLP criticised the NFP for producing a “mixed bag” of preference allocations and the voters too saw the NFP as a “confused” party uncertain about its political affiliation.

In total, the SDL received 44.9 per cent of the total votes in open seats whereas FLP got 42.6 per cent, reflecting ethnic and cultural patterns of voting evidenced in communal seats. 9 of the 25 open seats were determined by preferences and two of these, Suva City and Laucala Open, were won by SDL with a margin less than 2 per cent. Preferences played a significant role in these seats, indicating inter-group vote flows. It is argued that preference deals by political parties restrict individual preferences in the sense that a voter by voting “above the line” surrenders preference allocation to the party bureaucracy and as such “above the line” voting does not encourage democratic choice. In Fiji, all

political parties encouraged “above the line” voting and carried out detailed “how to vote” explanation in their flyers and pamphlets.

**Table 7: Performance of FLP and SDL in Open Seats in the 2006 Election**

| Open Constituency            | SDL          | FLP          | Fijian (Pop) | Indian (Pop) |
|------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Tailevu North/Ovalau         | 51.2%        | 12.3%        | 90.6%        | 6.3%         |
| Tailevu South/Lomaviti       | 61.4%        | 33.9%        | 68.9%        | 30.4%        |
| Nausori/Naitasiri            | 52.9%        | 47.1%        | 52.2%        | 44.6%        |
| Nasinu/Rewa                  | 46.4%        | 53.6%        | 46.0%        | 51.8%        |
| Cunningham                   | 51.2%        | 39.0%        | 57.2%        | 36.8%        |
| Laucala                      | 50.0%        | 50.0%        | 48.9%        | 44.4%        |
| Samabula/Tamavua             | 46.1%        | 53.9%        | 49.7%        | 42.5%        |
| Suva City                    | 51.0%        | 49.0%        | 53.9%        | 31.6%        |
| Lami                         | 55.8%        | 16.5%        | 72.3%        | 16.3%        |
| Lomaivuna/Namosi/Kadavu      | 73.0%        | 18.4%        | 83.5%        | 15.4%        |
| Ra                           | 63.5%        | 30.4%        | 68.4%        | 31.0%        |
| Tavua                        | 30.3%        | 53.9%        | 42.5%        | 55.1%        |
| Ba                           | 16.9%        | 63.3%        | 25.6%        | 73.3%        |
| Magodro                      | 24.2%        | 58.0%        | 28.3%        | 71.3%        |
| Lautoka City                 | 36.0%        | 52.3%        | 42.4%        | 52.2%        |
| Vuda                         | 28.3%        | 62.2%        | 32.3%        | 65.5%        |
| Nadi                         | 33.5%        | 52.1%        | 41.0%        | 55.3%        |
| Yasawa/Nawaka                | 26.7%        | 50.3%        | 38.4%        | 61.4%        |
| Nadroga                      | 46.5%        | 53.5%        | 54.4%        | 43.9%        |
| Serua/Navosa                 | 57.0%        | 43.0%        | 66.9%        | 30.7%        |
| Bua/Macuata                  | 54.4%        | 30.2%        | 63.6%        | 34.0%        |
| Labasa                       | 2.0%         | 62.2%        | 27.5%        | 70.3%        |
| Macuata East                 | 25.0%        | 62.5%        | 28.3%        | 70.9%        |
| Cakaudrove West              | 59.4%        | 16.7%        | 72.7%        | 16.5%        |
| Lau/Taveuni/Rotuma           | 78.5%        | 0.0%         | 79.5%        | 9.1%         |
| <b>Average on Open Seats</b> | <b>44.9%</b> | <b>42.6%</b> | <b>53.4%</b> | <b>42.4%</b> |

(Source: Fiji Elections Office)

The SDL won 13 open seats (52 per cent) and the FLP won 12 seats (48 per cent). FLP quickly challenged some of the results including the Laucala open seat won by the SDL by 0.1 per cent of the votes. By 18 May 2006, Laisenia Qarase was re-elected as the

Prime Minister of Fiji with the support of two independent candidates: George Konrote of the Rotuma Communal constituency and Robin Irwin of North Eastern General constituency. On the same day, Qarase invited the FLP to join his cabinet in a multiparty government.

#### **6.4 Power Sharing**

Multiparty governance as stipulated in Fiji's 1997 Constitution has been in limbo since the general elections of 2001. The leader of SDL, Laisenia Qarase repeatedly stated that a "forced" marriage of parties under section 99 of the 1997 Constitution was "unworkable". Following the 2001 general election, the FLP took the matter to the Supreme Court of Fiji, which upheld the constitutional provision of multiparty governance, reaffirming that a political party with 10 per cent or more of national seats in a general election must be invited to join cabinet without any conditions. Following the 2003 judgment, Qarase offered minor ministerial portfolios to the FLP and as a result the FLP declined the offer and chose to stay as an opposition party (The Canberra Times, 19 September 2003).

After the 2006 general elections, Laisenia Qarase demonstrated better national leadership by offering the FLP significant cabinet portfolios in Agriculture, Energy, Environment, Local Government, Commerce, Health and Mineral Resources. While initially protesting the offer, Chaudhry accepted the Prime Minister's invitation to join the multiparty cabinet (Fijilive, 19 May 2006).

Shane Martin (2005) of Trinity College in Dublin supports a strong committee system as a rational solution to principal-to-agent delegation inherent in a multiparty government. Shane's argument highlights the previously under-explored role of legislative institutions in facilitating coalition governments comprising of parties with divergent policy preferences. Arco Timmermans (2006) provides two options to the multiparty participants: parties in a multiparty government make commitments that are as detailed and binding as possible or to forego clear commitments and keep policy options open.

Fiji's Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarase, largely saw elections within a winner-loser power matrix and as such he acknowledged on Fiji Hindi radio station Navtarang on 17 May 2006 that he hoped that the FLP reject his offer and stay in opposition. However, nine FLP members joined the SDL led multiparty cabinet and both the Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase and the FLP leader Mahendra Chaudhry started work on cross-party consensus building. On 17 July 2006, the multiparty cabinet agreed to establish four sub-committees to deal with differences in policy and strategy between rival parties (Fijilive, 18 July 2006). The consensus on the ground rules for multiparty cabinet was seen as a first step towards a larger goal of building consensus democracy and alleviating racial conflict. However, cooperation between the two major parties started to wither as Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase brought the FLP cabinet members under the policy direction of the SDL. The leader of the FLP reacted to this development by issuing a directive to the FLP cabinet members to be guided only by the FLP party policy, thereby triggering a crisis in multiparty cabinet. Under the tension filled bi-party contest, there was no



contestatory pluralism of opposing voices in the cabinet, reflecting larger cultural and ethnic divisions due to a lack of inter-group contact.

## **6.5 The Political Role of the Military**

In Fiji, the military directly intervened in politics in May 1987 and ousted a multiracial government from power and since then remained in the forefront of Fiji politics, despite general elections in 1992, 1994, 1999, 2001 and 2006 (Saffu 1990: 159-170 & Brett 2008: 71-122). The 1990 Constitution made provision for continued political intervention but the 1997 Constitution was silent on this issue. However, the military in Fiji emphasised that it had constitutional authority to intervene in the name of national security.

In 2006, tensions between the Government of Fiji and the Republic of the Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) flared up when the commander of the RFMF, Commodore Frank Bainimarama, criticised Fiji's Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarase, over the introduction of the re-worked Racial Tolerance and Unity bill. During the Fiji Independence Day celebrations on 9 October 2006, the commander raised concerns about the quality of Fiji's leadership:

Commodore Bainimarama expressed his frustration at the government and said that he would do all in his means to ensure that his voice is heard in government. "Someone has to stand up to tell the government not to take us in that direction." The commander

admitted that his outbursts against the Government were due to the standard of leadership in the country and on the past corrupt policies” (The Fiji Sun 10 October 2006).

The relationship between the Fiji government and the army further deteriorated after the government appointed former Lieutenant Colonel Baledrokadroka to the post of the Commissioner of Prisons. Baledrokadroka was facing a military tribunal over his alleged attempt to depose Commodore Bainimarama in January 2006. Not only had the Fiji Military Forces challenged the government over poor policy choices, it claimed that the administration was corrupt. According to a 2005 US Department of State Country Report:

Corruption within government, including the civil service, was a problem. The media continued to raise numerous allegations of non-accountability, bribery, abuse of office, fraud, misuse of public property, financial mismanagement, failure to complete statutory audits, and conflicts of interest regarding officials and ministries. In some ministries transparency was virtually nonexistent. (US Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2005-Fiji, March 2006).

One of the reasons cited by the military for the military intervention in 2006 was the use of ethnicity by the SDL government to politically marginalise and discriminate against Indo-Fijians. Both the FLP and the SDL went into the 2006 elections with different political agendas. The SDL put forward the theme of “security”, which was driven by the ideology of paramountcy of Indigenous political interest whereas the FLP wanted to “change the future” so that Fiji could become a tolerant society that embraced diversity

and multiculturalism. Following the election, a multiparty government was instituted but without multiparty cabinet rules, ethnic and cultural competitions for political power and influence derailed cross-cultural collaboration and the multiparty cabinet.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

The history of 2006 election highlighted that despite a multiracial constitution, Fiji remained deeply divided along ethnic lines. These divisions were widened by the coup of 2000 and in particular by the physical violence suffered by the Indo-Fijians and the subsequent consolidation of an Indigenous ethno-nationalist state, which continued with pro-Indigenous policies in an attempt to unite Indigenous Fijians. However, efforts by the government to leverage inter-group conflict to promote Indigenous in-group solidarity failed because the 2000 coup caused divisions between the Indigenous government and the military, which started to question the utility of pro-Indigenous policies. Indo-Fijians concerned by the potential for violence and continued discrimination rallied behind their own communal bloc resulting in a highly divisive election outcome.

Realising deep divisions within Fiji, Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase had invited the Fiji Labour Party to join his multiparty cabinet. However, as discussed, the multiparty cabinet imploded under in-group communal pressure. The Indigenous government once again attempted without success to reintroduce a bill to grant amnesty to Indigenous nationalists involved in the 2000 coup. The actions of the government were seen by the

military as an affront to national security and a series of steps were taken by the commander Frank Bainimarama to oust the government from office in December 2006.

In the next chapter, I will analyse the attributes of violence in Fiji ethno-politics using Allport's inter-group theory. There were three forms of violence against Indo-Fijians: indirect violence in the form of discrimination, direct violence and extropunitive violence.

## **Part 3: Application of Inter-group Theory in Fiji**

## **Chapter 7: Attributes of Inter-group Violence in Fiji**

### **7.1 Introduction**

In an application of inter-group theory in Fiji, conflict equates to violence, notably indirect violence in the form of structural and institutional discrimination, and direct physical violence and the threat of it. Given the historical context of these moments of violence in Fiji, we can also see the space for in-group solidarity as a form of extropunitive violence. The historical location articulated in Part 1 of this thesis provides the notion that inter-group conflict in Fiji equates to violence, which is a key element of Allport's theory. Furthermore, the analysis of conflict as manifestations of violence enables an application of Gordon Allport's inter-group theory that focused on inter-group discrimination, violence and in-group solidarity in post World War II United States of America (Allport 1954: 132).

Allport's analysis of prejudice was focused on discrimination and violence by the dominant group against African Americans. In the context of American history, Allport argued that since the arrival of the slave ships from Africa, African Americans have suffered discrimination which was based on stereotyped beliefs. According to Allport (1954: 196), African Americans were seen by the dominant white community as culturally inferior, lazy, boisterous, fanatical, ignorant, crime-prone and occupationally unstable. For Allport (1954: 14-15) these beliefs lead to institutionalisation of discrimination against the out-group in the form of exclusion from certain types of

employment, political rights, educational opportunities and social privileges.

Discrimination then leads to organised violence which Allport locates in the history of lynching and pogroms against African Americans in the Southern United States. As a consequence of discrimination and violence, Allport theorised that there was greater in-group solidarity among African Americans.

While the historical context of discrimination, violence and in-group solidarity in the United States is specific to the African American community, aspects of Allport's analytical framework are portable and may be applied to Fiji which has a history of inter-group conflict. As discussed in Part 1, the inter-group conflict led to a military coup in 1987 and implementation of institutional and structural violence in the form of discrimination against Indo-Fijians. Discrimination then transformed into fear of violence and physical violence against the Indo-Fijian community during the 2000 coup. The political order that was established following the events of 2000 led to extropunitive violence as Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijian communities rallied for greater in-group solidarity, thus escalating the inter-group conflict. In keeping with Allport's history as a method, discrimination and violence against Indo-Fijians as well as inter-group and in-group solidarity will be examined in an historical context as critical historical moments in the following analysis.

## **7.2 Institutional and Structural Violence**

Earlier in the thesis in Chapter 4, I established an historical context for discrimination against Indo-Fijians. This discrimination was structured and institutionalised for it allowed the Indigenous nationalists to politically marginalise and subordinate the Indo-Fijian community. According to Ravuvu (1991: 87) such discrimination was premised upon years of categorical prejudgment of the Indigenous Fijian leaders that Indo-Fijians had a secret ambition to dominate Indigenous Fijians politically and use their influence to alienate Fijian land. Furthermore, the Indigenous nationalists argued that the Indo-Fijians were an economically dominant group and had established an ethnic economic bloc that created barriers for Indigenous Fijians to enter commerce through exclusionary practices (Sriskandarajah 2003: 317). A majority of Indigenous Fijians were convinced that institutionalisation of discrimination was necessary if Indo-Fijians were to be managed in Fiji. As a result of these prejudgments, there was a lot of support for the Indigenous nationalist view and in particular for the action of the leader of the Fiji Military Forces in 1987 against the multiracial coalition government. One of the most important features of discrimination against Indo-Fijians in Fiji from 1987 was these justifications of the Indigenous nationalist viewpoint (Sriskandarajah 2003: 319-320). These justifications form an important pillar for the analysis of discrimination as it provides an insight into the thought processes of the Indigenous group at the time.

Allport (1954: 51-52) noted that discrimination comes about when individuals and groups are denied equality of treatment and it occurs “when we take steps to exclude members of



an out-group through restrictive conventions” which include unequal recognition, inequality of personal security, inequality of freedom, inequality in the enjoyment of free communication, inequality in the enjoyment of rights to nationality, inequality in the right to participate in government, and inequality in access to public office. On 14 May 1987, Indigenous nationalists within Fiji’s military ousted a multiracial government and removed Indo-Fijian government ministers from power (Lal 1988). Not only, Indo-Fijians were removed from political power, they were systematically pushed out of the Fiji public service and the Indigenous nationalists successfully constitutionalised discrimination via the 1990 Constitution. Therefore, the consequences of the 1987 military coup were institutionalisation of discrimination against Indo-Fijians.

Eddie Dean and Stan Ritova in 1988 compiled a biography of the coup leader Sitiveni Rabuka titled *No Other Way*. In it, Rabuka argued that his action to remove Indo-Fijians from political power was necessary to protect the Indigenous population from the economically dominant Indo-Fijians. Moreover, for Rabuka, it was equally important to discriminate against Indo-Fijians so that Indigenous Fijians can catch up with the community economically. Discrimination for economic purposes is highlighted by Allport, who argued that discriminatory policies by the dominant group are reflected in the restrictive conventions that are established to deny the out-group “equal opportunity” (Allport 1954: 52). Allport further qualified that these restrictive discriminatory conventions are not based on facts but are mainly fictional and play on the “ignorance of the dominant group” (Allport 1954: 513). The biography of the coup leader by Eddie Dean and Stan Ritova (1988: 11) underscores the point raised by Allport. Rabuka saw the

god given land of Fiji under threat from an immigrant race that had the potential to take over political power and complete its control over the country. Rabuka saw this prospect as an inevitable flow on from the election of the coalition government on 11 April 1987 which, even though it claimed to be multiracial, was dominated by Indo-Fijians. The removal of the coalition government via a military coup was essential for the survival of the Indigenous Fijian race.

Closely associated with the survival of the Fijian race argument was a prevalent misconception among Indigenous nationalists that it was only a matter of time before Indo-Fijian government ministers in the coalition government attacked the very heart of Indigenous identity: the Fijian land. Besides Rabuka, Deryck Scarr sympathising with the Indigenous nationalist viewpoint argued that:

before an ethnic chief justice , as before any other, an acquiring authority may acquire any lands for any purpose according to the Crown Acquisition of Lands Act and specifically acquire it for any dwellings under the Local Government Act, provided the court is satisfied that the taking of possession of acquisition is necessary or expedient in the interest of defense, public safety, public order, public morality, public health or any of the property in such a manner as to promote public benefit ( Scarr 1990: 237).

If we apply Allport's theory (Allport 1954: 335) to Fiji, the views expressed by the coup leader Sitiveni Rabuka and Deryck Scarr on Indigenous nationalist justifications could be conceptualised as "rationalisations for discrimination" which were fictional, in the sense that there was no historical evidence to infer that Indo-Fijians threatened Indigenous

Fijian land or had ambitions to politically dominate the community. According to Ralph Premdas and Jeffrey Steeves (1991: 164), “the new coalition government had done absolutely nothing to threaten any aspect of Indigenous Fijian land, which in any case, was constitutionally safeguarded and entrenched in the Senate”. However, Indigenous community conventions on political power based on political hegemony (Lawson 1991: 183) dictated otherwise as Indigenous voices of moderation were marginalised and conventions on discrimination became a widely accepted value concept (Far Eastern Economic Review, 15 October 1987).

The Indigenous nationalist rationalisation for discrimination was sufficient to scuttle Indigenous in-group moral outrage against the coup. The deposed Prime Minister of Fiji, Timoci Bavadra, Tupeni Baba and other Indigenous pro-democracy activists Simione Durutalo and Jone Dakuvula found it increasingly difficult to argue against the arguments in favour of discrimination against Indo-Fijians (Bain & Baba eds 1990). The coups of 1987 had successfully established a community pattern where Indigenous Fijians largely accepted the rationale behind the military takeover and discrimination against Indo-Fijians. By applying Allport’s theory to Fiji, we can argue that the 1987 coup had created an “atmosphere saturated with collective in-group belief that a member cannot escape its effects” (Allport 1954: 236). While Allport was referencing organised white racism against African Americans, the same argument can be applied in Fiji. According to the Indigenous Fijian nationalists, Indo-Fijians could not be trusted and institutional safeguards had to be instituted so that Indo-Fijians were permanently removed from any form of political influence. In this context, discrimination against the community was

both just and necessary. The ultimate result of these beliefs and conventions was the promulgation of a racially-weighted constitution in 1990.

Indo-Fijian submission to the Constitution Inquiry and Advisory Committee (CIAC) noted discrimination in the allocation of parliamentary seats. A joint submission by Indo-Fijian Fiji Labour Party and the National Federation Party argued that the allocation of seats and the electoral system for all purposes eliminate completely any influence of the Indo-Fijian community or their leaders in politics or government policy (NFP/FLP submission to the CIAC, 1989). Constitutional expert Yash Ghai validated the Indo-Fijian concerns when he stated that the “primary characteristics of the constitution are racism, authoritarianism and feudalism” (Ghai & Pao 1991: 17).

Following the 1987 coups, Indo-Fijians were removed from the political arena and from senior positions in the public service. Indigenous Fijian nationalists justified their actions on grounds that Indo-Fijians wanted to dominate the Indigenous community politically and had plans to alienate Indigenous land. Using Allport’s theory on the role of discrimination in inter-group conflict, I have argued that Indigenous nationalists established a community convention on discrimination and this led to the collective belief that Indo-Fijians could not be trusted and as a result should not be given an opportunity to be part of any government. According to ‘Atu Bain and Tupeni Baba (1990) and Jone Dakuvula (1992), moderates within the Indigenous community found it extremely difficult to argue against the nationalist viewpoint, and an elaborate community pattern in

support of discrimination against Indo-Fijians emerged. Furthermore, discrimination was constitutionalised with the promulgation of the 1990 Constitution.

I argue that while Allport's theory was specifically referencing the social context of white discrimination against African Americans in the United States, the same logic and community conventions applied to the Fiji context. Allport identified that dominant groups formed prejudgments of the out-group and developed community conventions to exclude the out-groups from positions of authority and power (Allport 1954: 235). These conventions as defined by Allport had two objectives: to provide a rationale for discrimination and to circumvent moderate voices against exclusion of the out-group (Allport 1954: 365).

As I have demonstrated using Allport's theory, in Fiji, institutional and structural violence (Allport 1954: 49) in the form of discrimination operated against Indo-Fijians following the 1987 coup and Indigenous voices of moderation were silenced through community conventions around the paramountcy of Indigenous political interest. In the next section, I utilise Allport to analyse the historical context of fear of violence and direct violence during the 2000 coup when members of the Indigenous nationalist community were mobilised against rural Indo-Fijians.

### **7.3 Direct Physical Violence and fear of Violence**

The manifestation of violence against rural Indo-Fijians during the height of the 2000 coup was a result of the discrimination which was instituted against the community following the 1987 coup. According to Allport's (1954) theory on discrimination, the negative or oversimplified views become justification for discrimination of the out-group, as discussed in the Fiji context in the previous section. In the case of Indo-Fijians, it was argued by Indigenous Fijian nationalists that Indo-Fijians had secret ambitions to alienate Indigenous land and had plans to dominate the community politically. As a result, a discriminatory 1990 Constitution was implemented by the Indigenous nationalists in 1990 to safeguard against potential Indo-Fijian encroachment in the Indigenous Fijian way of life. However, the in-group solidarity among Indigenous Fijians became unsustainable as coup leader, Sitiveni Rabuka, was forced to seek the assistance from Indo-Fijian National Federation Party to salvage his own and his party's political fortune but the structures of discrimination and exclusion remained, despite the promulgation of a multiracial constitution in 1997 (Naidu 2008: 161). Even more troubling was that Indigenous nationalist views on Indo-Fijians became even more hardline following the election of Indo-Fijian Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry. Indigenous nationalists reinvented the arguments used to justify the 1987 coups. More specifically, they argued that Indigenous land and identity faced imminent danger from the immigrant Indo-Fijian community and nationalist emissaries held disinformation campaigns in Indigenous Fijian villages throughout Fiji (PACNEWS, 20 April 2000). The difference between the

Indigenous nationalist campaign against Indo-Fijians in 1987 and in 2000 was advocacy for and the use of physical violence.

We can relate Fiji's historical experience to the theoretical ideas of Gordon Allport (1954: 57) who argued that once the dominant group accepted the rationale for discrimination and became part of the popular community belief; it would be just a matter of time before discrimination manifested itself into organised violence. Allport (1954: 154) argued that violence would be caused by a "triggering event" and in the case of Fiji, it was the 2000 coup. The historical location of the 2000 coup discussed in Chapter 5 provides the context for this section where Allport's theory on inter-group violence established in Chapter 1 is used to analyse the use of Indigenous nationalist direct violence against Indo-Fijians in 2000.

As I have highlighted in Chapter 5, there was an organised campaign of violence against the Indo-Fijians, especially those in rural areas. Most of the Indo-Fijian settlements in rural Fiji are in close proximity to Indigenous Fijian villages and in places like Tailevu, Naitasiri, Dreketi, Batiri, Muaniweni and Korovou, Indo-Fijians farmers were surrounded by Indigenous villages and faced the brunt of Indigenous nationalist anger against the out-group (The Times of India, 13 August 2000). According to Allport (1954: 20), the categorisation of out-groups "forms the basis for normal prejudice" which is translated to community anger as a result of a triggering event. For Allport (1954: 363), anger is a "transitory emotional stage and it leads to impulses to attack the source of the frustration". In the case of Fiji, the source was Indo-Fijians and more importantly, the location of Indo-Fijians in rural Fiji made them easy targets. As discussed in Chapter 5,

the initial target of Indigenous nationalist anger was the Indo-Fijian Prime Minister and his cabinet but by May 2000, this anger was projected on to all of the Indo-Fijian community (Trnka 2008b: 46).

Allport (1954:15) argues that anger against an out-group is one of the conditions that lead to acts of violence. As an example, Allport highlights a situation where an unwanted African American family may be forcibly ejected from a predominantly white neighbourhood or so severely threatened that the family leaves in fear. A similar predicament befell the Indo-Fijian community during the 2000 coup. Susanna Trnka (2002, 2008b) examined in detail the ethnography of violence against Indo-Fijians during the height of the 2000 crisis. She confirmed that the violence against Indo-Fijians was not only sporadic but specifically targeted to instil fear in the community.

Allport's research on inter-group violence in the United States provides an extensive list of conditions for physical attack on an out-group by the dominant group, including the role played by long periods of categorical judgment (Allport 1954:57-58). These judgments are used by activists within the dominant group to justify direct violence against members of the out-group. Following an examination of Fiji's historical context in Chapters 3 & 4, I have analysed that since the colonial times, Indo-Fijians were stereotyped as deceptive, untrustworthy and harbouring secret ambition to destroy Indigenous culture. These beliefs crystallised during the coups of 1987 when Indigenous Fijian nationalists imposed restrictive discriminatory conventions on Indo-Fijians, who were removed from political power and from holding influential positions in the public



service. Moreover, the discrimination that flowed from the coups was constitutionalised in 1990. Despite a new multiracial constitution in 1997, negative Indigenous nationalist prejudice against Indo-Fijians continued and the Indigenous government that was in power from 1992 to 1999 did nothing to address these prejudices, including the structures and institutions of discrimination established following the 1987 coup.

Allport (1954: 58) further argued that another important condition for physical violence against the out-group is “perceived outside strain” on the members of the in-group, particularly economic privation, sense of low status and irritation due to political developments. In application of Allport’s theory on inter-group violence to Fiji, the historical events in the country highlight that there was a long standing complaint from Indigenous nationalists that Indo-Fijians had dominated the community economically and that there was notable disparity in income and wealth between Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijians. As an example, Indigenous nationalists highlighted the low rent that was paid by most Indo-Fijian farmers for leasing Indigenous Fijian land as discussed in Chapter 4. Finally, Allport (1954:58) argued that a precipitating event has a potential to unleash destructive and violent social forces against the out-group. The 2000 coup was such an event that led to the mobilisation of Indigenous nationalists against Indo-Fijians (The Independent, 1 August 2000).

According to the ethnography of violence by Susanna Trnka (2002: 328) “rural violence occurred in certain areas of Fiji. It was most prevalent in the Speight stronghold of Naitasiri Province, particularly in the areas of Vunidawa and Muaniweni”. Trnka’s research suggests that most of the perpetrators of violence were young disaffected

Indigenous Fijian youth from local Indigenous Fijian villages and their targets were the residents of nearby Indo-Fijian settlements and villages. Furthermore, large numbers of Hindu, Muslim and Christian Indo-Fijians fled from these areas, settling in Fiji's first refugee camp at the Girit Centre in Lautoka in the western part of Fiji (Trnka 2002: 329)

Trnka (2002: 334) argued that some Indo-Fijian victims of violence knew their assailants. Accounts of violence were told for a number of reasons. Between May and August of 2000, Trnka observed that this was the period where the violence was of such an explosive nature that people spoke of it almost constantly to make sense of what was happening in their daily lives. In the context of widespread community violence, narratives of brutality acted as records of the events that were rapidly changing the lives of Indo-Fijians, especially those living in rural Fiji. Trnka further stated that narratives of violence "not only helped people make sense of and come to terms with what was happening to them and their communities, but they served as warnings to those who were perceived as potential victims. Telling such stories forced listeners to engage with the possibility of events that previously might have been difficult to imagine" (Trnka 2002: 346)

Besides actual direct physical violence, the Indo-Fijian community was also gripped by the fear of violence, following the 2000 coup. Trnka in her book *State of Suffering* identified a historical moment on a school day immediately after the 2000 coup when Indo-Fijian parents, fearing for the safety of their children, rushed to the school only to find that the principal and the teachers of the school had abandoned the premises in fear

of ethnic violence, leaving the school kids scared and confused. Trnka further observed that “ethnically motivated attacks were in the forefront of many Indo-Fijians. For the first few days following the 2000 coup, many Indo-Fijians in Suva and Nausori did not leave their homes but remained indoors, closely observing the news on television and radio” (Trnka 2008b: 65).

Not only Susanna Trnka but Markus Pangerl (2007) analysed fear violence against Indo-Fijians during the 2000 coup and discovered that both Indo-Fijian women and men feared continued violence from Indigenous nationalists. The fear of violence in Pangerl’s research was accentuated not only in rural Fiji where the violence took place but in urban and peri-urban areas where Indo-Fijian women feared sexual violence and “narratives by Indo-Fijian men reflected the distress they experienced in emphasising the need to guarantee the safety of their wives and daughters” (Pangerl 2007:259).

Henry Srebnik (2008:85) observed that direct acts of violence against Indo-Fijians “went unpunished as looting, arson, destruction of Indo-Fijian schools and places of worship” and were widespread during the 2000 coup. Former Indigenous Fijian Vice President of Fiji, Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi (2006: 294) noted that violence was possible because the social discourse between the two communities by Indigenous Fijians has been conceptualised primarily as a struggle for political, social and economic hegemony between “us” and “them”. Long periods of categorical prejudgment coupled with the coup of 2000 played a large part in mobilising emotions that caused angry and violent reactions from Indigenous nationalists. Indo-Fijians feared ethnic violence and were

physically attacked as highlighted by the research of Trnka (2002, 2008b), Pangerl (2007) and Srebrnik (2008).

In theorising inter-group violence, Allport (1954: 58) has argued that the continuation of violence against an out-group is socially facilitated by the in-group whose members develop high personal impulses and less private inhibitions. For Allport, violence also is an outgrowth of milder states of mind and in his study of anti-Semitism in Germany; he argued that violence against the Jewish community can be located in history: “verbal attacks in the time of Bismark against the Jewish community were relatively mild. Under Nazi Germany, verbal attacks deteriorated to direct physical violence against the Jewish community, and Jews were loudly and officially blamed for every conceivable crime from sex perversion to world conspiracy” (Allport 1954: 57).

In this section, I analysed the indirect fear of violence and direct physical violence unleashed against the Indo-Fijians by Indigenous nationalists following the coup of 2000. I utilised Allport theoretical ideas on inter-group theory to analyse the concept of anger as playing a predominant role in mobilising destructive emotions among the Indigenous population. I also mentioned other conditions for violence highlighted by Allport in his analysis of violence against African Americans during the 1950s United States and violence against the Jewish community in Nazi Germany. I argued that Allport’s theory on inter-group preconditions for violence, based on long periods of categorical judgment by the dominant group of the out-group, concerns about economic disparity, and community views on political domination, were relevant to Fiji because it was located in

the country's history as discussed in Chapter 5. Fear of violence and direct physical violence against Indo-Fijians during the 2000 coup highlighted the operation of Allport's theory. Moreover, I emphasised that the 2000 coup was the triggering event that led to large scale mobilisation against Indo-Fijians, particularly in rural Fiji. As analysed in the previous section, structural and institutional discrimination played a leading part in shaping Indigenous Fijian nationalist attitude towards Indo-Fijians and Indo-Fijian attitudes towards Indigenous Fijians. Following inter-group violence in 2000, both communities became inward focused, emphasising greater in-group solidarity or extropunitive violence. This characteristic of violence is discussed in the next section.

#### **7.4 Extropunitive Violence**

Collin Allport's theory on inter-group theory includes a notion of extropunitive violence. Extropunitive behaviour is characterised by hate, discrimination and political marginalisation of the out-group by the dominant in-group. For the in-group, group solidarity is established against the out-group and there is majority in-group consensus on maintaining and strengthening the structures of hate, discrimination and political marginalisation against the out-group. The collective extropunitive behaviour against the out-group over-time transforms into extropunitive violence as the dominant in-group positions itself culturally against the out-group through ideological justification for discrimination, marginalisation and violence. The violence maybe indirect, structural or direct and legitimises pushing out the out-group from the organisation, community or

country. For the out-group, group solidarity is established as a response to extropunitive violence by the dominant in-group (Allport 1954: 148).

Allport's research into in-group extropunitive attributes<sup>3</sup> was influenced by the analysis of Saul Rosenzweig (1944: 379-388) who discussed extropunitive violence as a response where an "individual or a group aggressively attributes frustration to external things or beings". For Allport (1954: 148), persecuted out-groups, in their response to extropunitive violence, may become "clannish" and develop special solidarity including ego defences. In his analysis of extropunitive violence, Allport argued that groups which suffer from frustration induced by discrimination, disparagement and violence develop behavioural characteristics such as "obsessive concern and suspicion of the out-group, strengthen in-group ties, and develop prejudice against other groups" (Allport 1954: 160). Furthermore, Allport (1954: 383) established that extropunitive violence can become a trait of personality, having two types of impact: "physical relief from pent-up tension and frustration and restoration of one's self esteem".

According to Allport (1954: 160), extropunitive violence leads to intropunitive violence where the dominant in-group become inward focused. Intropunitive violence is focused towards in-group dynamics created by hate, discrimination and political marginalisation of the out-group. Distinct from in-group solidarity, tensions and violence exist between members of the dominant in-group in response to justifying hate, discrimination,

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<sup>3</sup> For further discussions on extropunitive violence see: Triandis, Leigh Minturn & W. Lambert. 1961. 'Sources of Frustration and Targets of Aggression: A cross Cultural Study.' *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 62 (3): 640-648; and Mann, J. W. 1990. 'Extrapunitive Attributions.' *The Journal of Social Psychology* 130 (4): 453-457. Note: Collin Allport (1954) uses the term extropunitive while other inter-group theorists, for example, J.W. Mann, uses the term extrapunitive. Both terms have the same meaning.

marginalisation and violence against the out-group. Thus, intropunitive violence is violence by members of the dominant in-group against their own group.

Following the events of the year 2000, Indo-Fijians participated in the election of 2001 emotionally fragmented and feared further violence. Many did not turn up to vote even though Fiji had compulsory voting. An Indigenous nationalist government of Laisenia Qarase came to power and immediately after the election implemented discriminatory provisions to uplift the economic standards of Indigenous Fijians. The policy of the government reminded Indo-Fijians of the discrimination and political marginalisation that were instituted against them between 1987 and 1999. Moreover, the Indigenous government chose to down play the level of violence perpetrated by Indigenous nationalists against rural Indo-Fijians in 2000 and failed to assist or compensate any of the Indo-Fijian victims<sup>4</sup>. The actions of the government led to Indo-Fijian in-group solidarity and this was reflected in the 2006 election result, which was discussed in Chapter 6. Indigenous Fijians also became very in-group focused as they lent their support behind the government's affirmative action programs. In this section, I will utilise Allport's theory to analyse extropunitive violence against Indo-Fijians from 2000 to 2006 and as another location in history.

Indo-Fijians, following widespread physical violence against them in 2000, looked for support and comfort within their own in-group and this was reflected in the 2001 and 2006 general elections. Moreover, the reintroduction of discrimination against Indo-

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<sup>4</sup> Reverend Aquila Yabaki, Citizens Constitutional Forum (CCF) (2002). 'Statement at the launching of the Macro Study: Economic Development, Democracy and Ethnic Conflict in the Fiji Islands'. Fiji Teachers Union Hall, 11 February 2002.

Fijians became the hallmark of the Indigenous nationalist government that came to power following general elections in 2001 (Naidu 2008). For example, in 2001, the Indigenous nationalist government enacted the Social Justice Act on 21 December 2001 and since its promulgation, Indo-Fijian leaders condemned the measures in the Act as discriminatory and in contravention of the constitution. Despite the criticisms, the government in 2003 published a report on the affirmative programs for Indigenous Fijians and Rotumans wherein it stated that:

It is also a reality, given the ethnic divisions in Fiji's society, that affirmative action involves issues of race. These cannot and should not be overlooked. Fiji will only resolve its racial differences by dealing with them honestly and openly and removing the inequities and inequalities, which cause social and political tensions. This does not mean that the policies enacted to achieve this are racist. They should be seen in the wider context of development to improve the standards of living of all disadvantaged groups (Progress Report on implementation of affirmative action programmes under the Social Justice Act 2002-2003, Government of Fiji, 2004).

The Indigenous government failed to understand that Indo-Fijians were also seeking justice and that emphasis on the needs of Indigenous Fijians created an atmosphere of inter-group hostility. Indo-Fijians argued that while on the one hand the government was addressing social justice issues for Indigenous Fijians, it was on the other hand deliberately perpetrating social injustice against them. Furthermore, in July 2002, the NGO Coalition of Human Rights-Aids Task Force, Citizen Constitutional Forum, Fem Link Pacific, Fiji Citizens Freedom Movement, Ecumenical Centre for Research and



Education and Advocacy (ECREA), Fiji Disabled Society, Fiji Human Rights Group, Fiji Trades Union Congress (FTUC), Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, Fiji Women's Rights Movement, Fiji Young Lawyers Association (FYC), Greenpeace Pacific, National Council of Women and Women's Action for Change (WAC)-protested that the government's strategy was ill-conceived and highlighted discrimination in the way in which government scholarships were allocated to Indo-Fijians. According to the NGO Coalition of Human Rights:

There is a scholarship scheme for Indo-Fijians and other minorities, but the income cut-off for Indo-Fijian parents is \$6,000 while for other minorities it is \$10,000. This scholarship program is administered separately from that for Indigenous Fijians and Rotumans. The Indigenous Fijian Scholarship Scheme under the Ministry of Fijian Affairs does not have an income limit for eligibility (NGO Coalition of Human Rights, July 2002).

Statistical data on rural income showed that Indo-Fijians had higher income than Indigenous rural dwellers in 1997. However, since 1997, the income disparity between the two communities had largely diminished because a large number of Indo-Fijians migrated to squatter settlements as a result of non-renewal of sugar leases and violence after 2000 (Chand 2008: 83-98). The Squatter Resettlement Unit (SRU) estimated in 2005 that there was an unprecedented growth in squatters from 1996 to 2003, somewhere in the vicinity of 73 per cent. Whilst rural to urban migration, unemployment and poverty were mentioned as leading contributors, the expiry of leases was seen as a major driver. According to the Fiji Times (8 February 2005), "it was estimated by the SRU that by 2006, the Suva/Nausori corridor would have 15,000 mostly Indo-Fijian squatter

households or 90,000 people, which would place a lot of strain on infrastructure like water, sewerage, electricity, roads and social services”.

In its conclusion and recommendation, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) stated in 2003 that “the state party ensure that the specific protection and enhancement of Indigenous Fijians' rights comply with international standards relating to the prohibition of racial discrimination” (Conclusions and recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Fiji, U.N. Doc. CERD/C/62/CO/3, 2003). The Government of Fiji pointed to the affirmative action programs under the Social Justice Act as confirming to international conventions and treaties and that it had made provision of \$2.5 million in 2002 for scholarships and some 764 of these went to the Indo-Fijian community (Progress report on implementation of affirmative action programmes under the Social Justice act 2002-2003, Government of Fiji, 2004). However, Margot Solomon (2003: 85), following an extensive analysis of the Fiji government’s affirmative action program, concluded that the Social Justice Act was a “failure to allow all people the exercise of their rights in a manner that reflects the first precept of the human rights canon-that of the inherent dignity, and of equal and inalienable rights of all members”.

In the case of Indo-Fijians in post-2000 Fiji, the continuation of discrimination under the guise of social justice had clearly frustrated the community. Jill Cottrell and Yash Ghai (2007: 227-257) argued that the existence of the Indo-Fijian community provides a scapegoat and an excuse to continue with discriminatory practices. As a result, the Indo-

Fijian community strengthened its in-group ties in anticipation that inclusion of Indo-Fijian social issues as one of the government policy parameter was not possible under an Indigenous nationalist regime.

The extropunitive violence against Indo-Fijians by Indigenous Fijian nationalists was achieved through hate, discrimination and political marginalisation. The Indigenous nationalists created political conditions that forced Indo-Fijians to migrate overseas. The strategy against Indo-Fijians was aimed at fostering greater Indigenous in-group solidarity, and the Indigenous nationalist justification for extropunitive violence against Indo-Fijians is highlighted by John Davies. According to Davies:

The fundamental goal of the interim government was to achieve stability by balancing Fijian fears of losing control of their country with the need to diffuse the more extreme political force emanating from the very real nationalistic fervour unleashed by Speight. To achieve this, Interim PM Laisenia Qarase sought to introduce much more aggressive affirmative action programmes for Fijians, designed to bridge the representation gap in business and education, and a plan to again rewrite the constitution (Davies 2005: 57)

While John Davies presented the Indigenous nationalist views in support of extropunitive violence against the Indo-Fijian community, members of the Fiji military unleashed intropunitive violence against their own Indigenous community by overthrowing the Indigenous nationalist government in December 2006. Tensions between the government and the military over pro-Indigenous government policies started in 2003 and division between the military and the nationalists led to intra-group violence.

As discussed in Chapter 6, the military accused the Indigenous government and Indigenous nationalists of threatening national security and perpetuating ethnic divisions. During 2006, the Fiji military actively campaigned against the government, causing some Indigenous nationalists to observe that the military was now the enemy of Indigenous Fijians. Steven Ratuva (2007:44) noted that the involvement of military in the 2006 general election against the Indigenous government created an atmosphere of political uncertainty.

Utilising Allport's theory on extropunitive violence as hate, discrimination and political marginalisation, I have analysed how Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijians developed in-group solidarity for entirely different reasons. Indo-Fijians were highly critical of the Indigenous government's affirmative action programmes for Indigenous Fijians under the Social Justice Act of 2003 and the claims of the community were supported by the coalition of human rights groups. Moreover, Indo-Fijians were of the opinion that discrimination against them was similar to the restrictive conventions imposed on the community following the coup of 1987. In contrast to Indo-Fijians, Indigenous Fijians supported the policies of the Indigenous government between 2001 and 2006 and argued that affirmative action was necessary to bridge the inequality in wealth between the two communities. As a result, Indigenous Fijians promoted greater in-group solidarity and created political conditions that forced Indo-Fijians out of the country. However, I also argued that besides extropunitive violence, members of the Indigenous community, in particular the military, unleashed intropunitive violence against their own Indigenous community by overthrowing the government in the December 2006 Coup.

By using Allport's theory on in-group dynamics, I argued that hate, discrimination and political marginalisation by Indigenous nationalists led to extropunitive violence against Indo-Fijians. However, a section of the Indigenous Fijian community, the military, challenged extropunitive violence against Indo-Fijians and unleashed intropunitive violence against their own Indigenous community by ousting a nationalist government from power in a military coup in December 2006. Despite the coup, inter-group differences remained deeply ingrained in both communities and using Allport's theory on inter-group conflict resolution in the next chapter, I will argue for proposals for inter-group conciliation.

## **Chapter 8: A proposal for Inter-group Conflict Resolution**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter will emphasise the need for a three-pronged approach to building inter-group cooperation and includes addressing discrimination, violence and in-group solidarity, described in the previous chapter. By using Allport's ideas about national identity, a truth and reconciliation commission and legislative reforms, I argue the need for the establishment of a single national identity devoid of any racial or ethnic identification in Fiji; national reconciliation among all ethnic groups to take into account in particular historical events; and legislative reforms, in the form of strengthening committee systems of governance, and permitting political parties with opposing policies to utilise parliamentary frameworks to build consensus democracy.

Gordon Allport identified that inter-group conflict can be mitigated if there was a "national character". According to Allport (1954: 116), national character or national identity implies that "members of a nation, despite ethnic, racial, religious, or individual differences among them, do resemble one another in certain fundamental patterns of belief or conduct". Before the national character can take shape, Allport suggested individual and group therapy as a means to changing ethnic attitudes. Allport (1954:495) hypothesised that during the course of therapy, "racial attitudes may assume a salient role and may conceivably be dissolved or restructured along with the patient's other fixed way of looking at life". Allport (1954: 281) further theorised that "prejudice may be

reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals through institutional supports”, such as legislative change that is inclusive of the out-groups.

## **8.2 National Identity**

National identity is identified by Allport (1954: 99) as an important element in developing a common bond among diverse communities. In Fiji, identity is deeply embedded in communal politics and as a result vigorously contested. In 1997, Fiji’s new multiracial constitution established a new national category for identifying all Fiji citizens: Fiji Islanders. However, ethnic groups rejected this definition as “Indian”, and “Fijian” remained in common use, despite the intent of the constitution. Within the Indigenous Fijian community, Indigenous leaders, such as former Senator Adi Litia Cakobau and the former Minister for National Planning Jone Navakamocea, re-emphasised that they as a community have ownership of the name “Fijian” and strongly rebuked Indo-Fijian leaders and academics for using the term “Indo-Fijian” (Fijilive, 2 July 2004; BBC 7 July 2004; The Fiji Times, 5 August 2006)

Anthropologist Robert Norton noted that:

Identities are in some degree oppositional, asserting the virtue and power of 'tradition' by way of invidious contrast to foreign cultural influences. In varying degree all illustrate the activity of objectifying culture, of emphasizing selected attributes of culture as a way of affirming group distinctiveness. And in all, 'tradition' is in varying degrees discrepant

with the culture of pre-European times: there is an element of invention (Norton 1993: 745).

The “created” identities in Fiji have been to some extent given cultural meaning by various governments and this had continued largely unchallenged until the December 2006 coup. Indigenous nationalists objected to the use of “Fijian” as a common name because they claimed ownership of the word as well as its meaning. As a result, debates on a common name indicated that Indigenous Fijians did not wish to extend the meaning of the word “Fijian” to encompass all Fiji citizens, regardless of their ethnicity (The Hindustan Times, 5 August 2006).

To some extent, the dynamics of identity in Fiji have been profoundly shaped by colonial history (Lal 1992a). Upon assuming sovereignty in Fiji, the British attempted to preserve Indigenous Fijian culture. As the colony developed, there was a need for labour on sugar plantations, the British recruited indentured labourers from India, creating the tripartite division between Indigenous Fijians, Indo-Fijians, and Europeans.

Larson and Aminzade (2008: 801-831) noted that during colonial times, this division organised political life and Indigenous Fijians often allied with Europeans to resist demands by the near-majority Indo-Fijian population for a common electoral roll. In light of these political dynamics, Fiji’s negotiated independence included maintenance of separate voting roles and constitutionally mandated racial representation. Since independence, Fiji’s leaders have continuously reinforced communal identities. In a quick move to create some form of a national identity, the Reeves Commission in 1996



recommended Fiji Islanders to be the common name of all Fiji citizens. However, the constitution continued to identify Indigenous Fijians and other communities by their communal names, thereby reinforcing communal identities and defeating the intent of the Reeves Commission Report of 1996. Moreover, the 1997 Constitution promoted ethnocratic regimes that encouraged the expansion of the dominant group and power structures by maintaining a democratic facade. Diverse research explores this complex idea for example, in a study of land and identity politics in Israel and Palestine, Oren Yiftachel observed that “in most cases the national identity is intimately involved with institutionalisation and politicised religion (Yiftachel 2006: 3-16).

Father Kevin Barr argued that Christianity, more precisely Methodism, in Fiji has also been used by Indigenous nationalists to safeguard Indigenous Fijian identity. According to Barr (2004: 17), Indigenous nationalists have “changed Christianity from a religion of love into an ideology justifying and promoting separation, domination, exclusion, racism and hatred”. Jacqueline Ryle (2005: 72) largely supports this observation and argues that Indigenous Fijians identity is based on the ownership of land, Church and Government, which gives rise to modalities of exclusion and ethnic otherness (Hermann & Kempf 2005: 316).

In a sense, identity in Fiji is highly politicised and this identity politics operates according to an “identarian logic” (Lloyd 2005: 36) where in-group unity is sought beneath differences. While church, land and holding political power are essential part of Indigenous identity (Tuwere 2002), political equality, respect, history and geography

have become essential elements of Indo-Fijian identity. According to Carmen Voigt-Graf (2008: 106), “Indo-Fijian identity has been shaped through the collective memory of indenture in colonial times and of political discrimination and political coups in post colonial times”. Similar to Indigenous Fijian nationalists, indentarian logic also applies to the Indo-Fijian community in Fiji. Beneath religious and class differences, there is an overwhelming centripetal communal force towards glorification of the struggles of indenture or giriti and the post-colonial push for political equality.

Indo-Fijian author Rajendra Prasad argued that his interpretation of the past in the book *Tears in Paradise* (2004) would change the often incorrect perception of Indo-Fijian history by emphasising that indentured labour was not a period of shame but one of great sacrifice in Fiji. The stigma of shame, according to Prasad, rested solely on the shoulders of the British and Australian Governments, which considered indentured workers as sub-humans and allowed physical and sexual abuse to continue in the name of progress and civilization. In the second part of his book titled *Uncertain Future*, Prasad explained that the Indo-Fijians never took away the customary land rights of Indigenous Fijians but both in 1987 and again in 2000, Indo-Fijian community was accused by Indigenous Fijian nationalists of conspiring to alienate Indigenous land and as a result triggered two violent ethnic coups that forced many Indo-Fijians to seek a better future elsewhere. Prasad summarises that Indo-Fijians are the only community in the world running away from their embattled and embittered past.

2004 marked 125 years of Indo-Fijians in Fiji and to celebrate the anniversary, Indo-Fijian historian Brij Lal (2004) edited a collection of essays that reflected the ongoing Indo-Fijian emotions. Lal (2004: 3) observed that “one hundred and twenty-five years after arriving in the islands, the future for the Indo-Fijians look almost as bleak as it did for their forebears when they embarked in their unpredictable journeys from Calcutta and Madras to destinations unheard of or unknown”. Vijay Naidu (2004: 381) further explained that the marginalisation of Indo-Fijians have led to frustration, stress-related illnesses and suicide in the community. A series of post-2004 publications including a collection edited by Kavita Nandan (2005: XI) recorded the memories of those who remembered Fiji from outside the country. Within the stories documented, Nandan notes, lies a palpable pain, interspersed with memories of the vanishing worlds of Indo-Fijians caused by the Fiji coups and the continuing discrimination and racism for those still living in Fiji. Nandan (2005), Lal (2004), Naidu (2004) and Prasad (2004) concur that Indo-Fijian identity is shaped by the collective memory of indenture and the struggles for self respect and belonging forced upon the community by the military coups. In contrast, Indigenous Fijian identity is deeply embedded in the church, village and land (Ryle 2005). As a result, there are two different indentarian trajectories within a common indentarian logic of re-imagining and to some extent romanticising the past.

The Draft Peoples’ Charter released on 5 August 2008, following consultations within Fiji, proposed a common name for all Fiji citizens with full recognition of Indigenous Fijians as the *i-taukei*. The Charter argued that:

A common name includes the members of all communities in the country within a broad allegiance. It binds all of them as citizens to a larger and wider sense of belonging to 'their' nation state. The overarching significance of national identity, for governance and public policy, is that it creates a moral community within which everyone has equal rights to the care and attention of the government and the wider community....(The Draft Peoples' Charter for Change, Peace and Progress, 5 August 2008, p.47).

The deposed SDL Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase rejected the Charter recommendation of "Fijian" as a common name arguing that the "term (Fijian) was embedded into the Indigenous population: it is a very sensitive issue and it will be opposed very strongly" (Fijilive, 7 August 2008). Supporting Laisenia Qarase was the Methodist Church President Reverend Laisiasa Ratabacaca and General-Secretary Reverend Tuikilakila Waqairatu (The Fiji Times, 28 August 2008). Indigenous nationalists have argued that the word is "Indigenous" in origin and as a result alienating the word without proper Indigenous cultural processes violated the United Nations Declarations on Indigenous Peoples (Francis Waqa Sokonibogi, Fiji Indigenous Ownership Rights Association, letter to the editor, The Fiji Times, 11 July 2004). However, supporters of the use of "Fijian" as a common name respond that the word "Fijian" was a European invention and had nothing to do with Indigenous culture and that the word can be used to enhance national identity (Lal 2004).

As evidenced in recent history, a national identity for Fiji via a common name is a difficult task. However, it is argued here that the risk of not working towards this goal means continuing with the instability and conflicted social and political culture that has

permeated Fiji for a very long time. The leader of the current government in Fiji, Commodore Frank Bainimarama, believes that a common name of “Fijian” will immensely assist in redirecting the Indigenous Fijian mindset by providing a disincentive for discrimination, violence and destructive nationalism that had plagued the country since the 1987 coup (Fijilive, 22 November 2007). However, Indigenous Fijians also have a deep sense of Indigenous identity and belonging. Thus the proposed alternative of Fiji Islander has been dismissed by the community as a contravention on Indigenous culture, tradition and history. Besides implementing an agreed national identity, based on Allport’s theory on inter-group conciliation, some form of truth and reconciliation process needs to compliment moves to create a national identity to lessen both inter-group and in-group tensions as discussed below.

### **8.3 Truth and Reconciliation**

Allport (1954: 495) argued that the best way to overcome discrimination, violence and continued prejudice is to initiate an open and inclusive process of “national therapy” or “national reconciliation”. Allport (1954: 496) argued that national therapy in terms of truth telling and reconciling with the victims can result in changes in attitudes and simply by talking about past injustices, members of the group often gain new perspectives and can discover wholesome and constructive ways of approaching the out-group.

Experiences with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa have influenced similar models throughout many post-conflict societies (Graybill 2002). In

South Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established with several fundamental characteristics that contributed to its unique character. The most important feature of the South African exercise in comparison with other commissions was the power to grant amnesty to individual perpetrators. It was the first time that so much power was invested in a commission. The South African Parliament granted the TRC the authority to give amnesty to acts “associated with political objectives”. Despite initial success of the South African approach, there is still ongoing debate regarding the efficacy of the Truth Commission, Audrey Chapman noted that:

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) had difficulties in conceptualizing forgiveness and reconciliation on an inter-group level and concentrated instead on relationships between individual victims and perpetrators. Former victims and members of their families who testified at the violations hearings rarely mentioned these topics unless prompted to do so, and those who did were generally not inclined to forgive perpetrators. At the amnesty hearings perpetrators were reluctant to acknowledge their wrongdoing or to offer meaningful apologies, expressions of regret, or some form of compensation to those who had suffered. In light of these data, the efficacy of the TRC’s approach to forgiveness and healing and the capacity of transitional justice mechanisms in post-conflict societies to promote forgiveness and reconciliation is questionable (Chapman 2007:51).

In Northern Ireland, for example, there has been a long-term and often heated debate, particularly within civil society, as to the best way to deal with the legacy of the past. Central to this debate is whether or not there needs to be some form of official “truth

recovery” process or truth commission. Lundy and McGovern (2007: 336-337) through their survey of attitudes among Northern Ireland residents to a truth commission conclude that for many in the community there is a “need for some sort of mechanism to get at the truth of the past conflict”. On the other hand, the researchers discovered that “precisely how to get to the truth, what mechanisms are best suited to do so, and what might be done with it afterwards, is far less clear”.

A report published by the Consultative Group on the Past in January 2009 in Northern Ireland recommended that a “Legacy Commission” be established for truth recovery. The work of the Consultative Group highlighted how international justice norms are interpreted at a local level in a way that takes account of local histories and priorities. According to Aoife Duffy (2010: 26-46), instead of challenging the structural and institutional inequalities that underpinned the violence of the conflict in Northern Ireland and opening up new pathways to accessing truth and justice, the Consultative Group's report advocated a truth-recovery process that was not open to public scrutiny and was couched in the language of forgetting, which begs the question whether the Northern Ireland initiative on truth and reconciliation was a genuine attempt at exploring sidelined or dissenting narratives of conflict, or merely another forum in which to contain them. The Northern Ireland example highlights the difficulty in implementing social processes that will enable mutually trustworthy behaviour resulting in inter-group reconciliation.

In Fiji, attempts by the nationalist Soqosoqo ni Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL) government at reconciliation had a devastating effect. While borrowing some elements of

the South African approach, the Fiji government in June 2005 politicised the reconciliation endeavour by describing nationalist coups of 1987 and 2000 as a legitimate expression of Indigenous fears. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established to encourage truth telling with the hope of reconciling the victims and the perpetrators of the past injustices. According to Richard Wilson (2001: 15), “truth-telling healing and nation-building were integrated by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission” to provide a meaningful framework for restorative justice, repentance and ultimately forgiveness for past crimes. However, in Fiji, there was no such integrated initiative. The Indigenous nationalist government borrowed only the intent of the South African truth and reconciliation initiative but chose to manipulate the process by arguing that the perpetrators of the past injustice only had to convince the Amnesty Committee of their intentions to acknowledge past injustices and not necessarily reconcile with the victims. The reconciliation process initiated by the Fiji authorities infuriated the Indo-Fijian community, which was affected by Indigenous nationalist violence following the 2000 coup. Besides Indo-Fijians, the Fiji Military Forces saw the reconciliation initiative as a recipe for continued Indigenous Fijian nationalist domination and intervention in government (Ramesh 2006).

There were a number of concerns regarding the Racial Tolerance and Unity Bill of 2005 in Fiji. The most controversial was the amnesty provision (Ramesh 2006). The amnesty clause was a problem for a number of reasons. First, it was feared that the amnesty would interfere with ongoing investigations into the 2000 coup and compromise the judiciary, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, and the military. Secondly, the amnesty



provision was seen by many Indo-Fijians and non-government organisations as simply a political measure by the nationalist SDL government to position itself for the 2006 general elections. Thirdly, it was widely held that the proposed amnesty would not compel perpetrators of the events of 2000 to tell the truth or offer any meaningful reconciliation to the victims.

A more reasonable and palatable approach would have been to establish an independent Commission on Healing, Truth and Justice as was the case in South Africa with powers to receive evidence from perpetrators and victims and then recommend appropriate reconciliation. The truth and reconciliation for past injustices against the Indo-Fijian community is mentioned in the Draft Peoples' Charter for Change, Peace and Progress of August 2008. In any case, similar to the South African experience, an Amnesty Committee comprised of three members: one representative from the victim's group, a representative from the government and an independent legal expert nominated by the Fiji Law Society ought to be established. The role of the Amnesty Committee should be to invite perpetrators to tell the whole truth and subpoena individuals identified by the victims and seek truth regarding their actions. The Amnesty Committee should also invite victims to tell their side of the story and ensure that a reconciliation process that is culturally meaningful to both victims and perpetrators is implemented. Once the parties have reconciled and the Amnesty Committee is satisfied that the perpetrators have truthfully disclosed all facts regarding their past actions, the Amnesty Committee could then recommend amnesty. If the Amnesty Committee forms an opinion that the perpetrator or the victim is not telling the truth, then the Amnesty Committee should be

able to seek corroborating statements from other witnesses and potentially deny amnesty. According to Michael Humphrey (2005: 217) healing through victim-centred truth politics ensures that “victims become the vehicle for reconciliation with the therapeutic focus for changing individual attitudes towards the past”. Evidence from South Africa demonstrates that “recalling and publicly recounting hurts and humiliations endured have a therapeutic effect on victims and facilitate reconciliation between them and those who inflicted the injuries” (Solomon 2002: 224).

In addition, it is also proposed in the Charter that a Reparation Committee shall be established and comprise of a representative from the victim’s group, a government representative and an independent legal expert. The victim should not have to prove “gross human rights violation” as stipulated by the failed Racial Tolerance and Unity Bill of 2005. The burden of providing the truthful account of the wrongdoing should be placed on the shoulders of the accused. Testimony under oath by the victims in the Amnesty Committee should be taken as truthful disclosure of facts relevant for determining reparation payment, which should take into consideration physical harm, damage to property, trauma, loss of earning, and post-traumatic stress.

Fiji has an opportunity to progress an inclusive truth and healing process where both the perpetrators and the victims engage in genuine conciliation and move forward. A recent study (Pettigrew 2010: 425) has indicated that truth and reconciliation measures can provide better inter-group relations, improve attitudes and provide opportunities for minorities to understand and engage with majority processes. Whilst there is an

appreciation throughout Fiji for some kind of Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Allport's theoretical ideas about inter-group conciliation suggest there is also a need for a system that supports significant legislative reform (Allport 1954: 461). I argue this is evident in the Fiji context as illustrated below.

#### **8.4 Legislative Reforms**

Legislative reform is identified as one of the mechanisms for achieving inter-group consensus at the political level. Allport (1954: 461) identified the committee system as playing an influential role in affecting political reforms. The classic power indices relating to political representation assumes that the party winning the most seats forms the government. These assumptions are largely reflected in western democracies that are based on "winner takes all" systems. However in Europe, especially in Nordic countries, multiparty governance with mixed electoral systems, aimed at promoting better representation of smaller parties, remains a norm, since electoral reform started in the Weimer Republic in Germany in the early twentieth century. Fiji in 1997 and New Zealand in 1998 moved away from the first-past-the-post electoral system to a more mixed preferential and proportional forms of voting.

In ethnically divided societies such as Guyana, Trinidad, Suriname, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Fiji, precise political engineering is not only impossible but impractical. Evidence from Guyana, South Africa, Bosnia, Rwanda indicate that politics of "inclusion" with defined politico-constitutional structures, backed by good leadership

can lessen inter ethnic tensions and provide a national framework for multiethnic political discourse. In some cases, truth and reconciliation systems, like the ones established in South Africa (Chapman 2007: 51-69) and Rwanda (Kaminski & Nalepa 2006: 393-394), assisted inter-ethnic conciliation whereas in Fiji, the Racial Tolerance and Unity Bill (RTU) created further cleavages, because civil society as well as the opposition political parties were disengaged from the initial process.

Following the 2006 military coup and the publication of the Draft Peoples' Charter for Change, Peace and Progress on 5 August 2008, the question remained whether consensus democracy in Fiji could flourish and diminish, over time, inter-ethnic tensions. Moreover, with a lack of defined institutional structures detailing legislative processes in a multiparty government, instead of building and maintaining consensus democracy in Fiji, the cabinet in Fiji in the past became dysfunctional and divided along either party or racial lines. Malcolm Shaw (1998: 243) has observed that governing systems in mostly developing countries, including Fiji, have "embodied typically authoritarian features which include weak legislature with an underdeveloped committee system". However evidence from states like Lithuania (Clark, Verseckait & Lukosaitis 2006: 747) and Zambia (Burnell 2002: 291-313) suggests that changes to party system, institutional balance between executive and legislature and political culture can give rise to effective parliamentary committees. Besides delegation, to make representative democracy work in divided plural communities, a number of electoral systems (Fraenkel & Grofman 2006: 623-651) and power sharing arrangements have been recommended and even tested via constitutional arrangements in a number of countries.

Power sharing is a concept popularised by Lijphardt (1995:863-864) in his work on democracy in divided societies in which he developed the framework for consociational or consensus form of government, which allows for power sharing at the executive level without mandating a grand coalition of all significant parties and therefore eliminating significant partisan opposition in parliament (Lijphardt 2004: 103). Studies in multiparty government have tended to focus on the design of multiparty systems. However, little has been said about how different parties with often competing ideologies or interests or communal, ethnic and provincial allegiance can provide political as well as cabinet stability within a framework of multiparty government (Dryzek 2005: 218-242).

Usually, government parties, in multiparty settings, have the incentives to seek, and the means to secure, a policy agenda that accommodates, in as much as possible, the preferences of all partners in a coalition (Martin 2004: 446). There are a number of instruments available to multiparty governments and among them are inner-cabinet committees of coalition leaders, inter-ministerial committees, parliamentary leadership groups, and party summits. According to Lanny Martin, lawmaking is a challenge for coalition governments because it inherently demands cooperation and compromise by parties with divergent policy goals (2004:457). While academics recognise that the concept of multiparty power sharing is problematic, there is, however, a need to develop parliamentary based multiparty institutional framework for both executive and non-executive bills, especially in divided societies. This kind of consensus approach removes

the focus away from cabinet conformity to “consensus” at the parliamentary committee stage.

A committee system as a means of fostering greater cooperation among parties with diverging views has existed in western European and American democracies for some time. For example, Allport (1954: 461) identified that the President’s Committee on Civil Rights became a rallying point for the forces of tolerance and inclusive government. More importantly, committees in US and European democracies initiate legislation in the form of committee bills. However, there are only two national parliaments in western Europe, Sweden and Iceland, and a number of sub-national assemblies, including the Scottish Parliament do committees possess largely unrestricted rights of legislative initiative (Arter 2003: 80). The important feature of the Scottish experience is the establishment of a Consultative Steering Group (CSG) that has the task of marrying traditional representative democracy with the elements of a form of participatory democracy. For example:

Strong Committees in the Scottish setting are aimed at fostering greater consensus with an emphasis on reducing partisanship. The Scottish Parliament has permanent and specialised committees with relatively small numbers of members; a proportional (by party) number of chairs selected by a committee; committee deliberation both before and initial and final plenary stages; the ability to initiate and re-draft bills; and the ability to invite witnesses and demand government documents (Arter 2006: 183).

The Parliamentary committee system is not new to Fiji. Under previous parliaments, committees were provided for in the Standing Orders of the House. These committees regulated the affairs of the House and dealt with public accounts. In 1996, the Government of Fiji established a Joint Parliamentary Select Committee on Constitution (JPSC) to achieve “consensus” on the recommendations of the Reeves Commission Report of 1996.

On 10 September 1996, Fiji’s Constitution Review Commission report was tabled in Parliament. Following the endorsement of the CRC report from the President, the former Prime Minister of Fiji, Sitiveni Rabuka, successfully moved in the House the following motion:

That the Joint Select Committee on the Constitution shall consider and deliberate upon the report of the Constitution Review Commission to secure passage of such amendments and changes to the Constitution as may be agreed upon by and between the various parties and groups and or as deemed necessary or desirable (The House of Representatives, Daily Hansard, 10 September 1996: 1026).

Sitiveni Rabuka spoke of consensus and unity and his deliberations were supported by opposition leader Jai Ram Reddy. It was agreed that all parties in parliament would participate in the discussions and arrive at a consensus upon which the foundations of the new Fiji Constitution would be built.

The Joint Parliamentary Select Committee on Constitution was the only time when political leaders of Fiji attempted to seriously build consensus on a divisive issue of constitutional reform. A closer analysis of the approach of the Soqosoqo ni Vakevulewa ni Taukei (SVT) leader Sitiveni Rabuka towards constitutional accommodation of minorities indicate a desire by him to offset the rising tide of Indigenous in-group tension and conflict by forging closer cooperation with Indo-Fijians. Before the 2006 coup, Fiji had a system of select committees, which met to discuss issues raised within parliament but did not deliberate on bills. Political parties remained largely isolated in their own respective communal blocs as multiparty cabinet became a forum for discussing policy differences. Nevertheless, there were missed opportunities because the 1997 Constitution, despite its failures, provided for a viable committee structure, which was never built upon by Fiji's communal leaders because it compromised their communal position.

The abrogated 1997 Constitution of Fiji allowed for 5 sector standing committees with the functions of scrutinising Government administration. They were: Administrative Services; Economic Services; Foreign Relations; Justice, Law and Order; Natural Resources; and Social Services Committee Under the SDL Government (2001-2006), there were a number of ad hoc committees established, including the ad hoc Committee on Land, formed on 27 April 2004, comprising of 8 government members, the Leader of the Opposition, 6 members of the Fiji Labour Party and 2 nominees of the Great Council of Chiefs in the Senate.



The ad hoc Committee on Land failed after the Fiji Labour Party refused to participate following the release of the Racial Tolerance and Unity Bill in 2005. The failure of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Land suggests that there was an urgent need for developing consensus among various parties in the House before presenting a bill to the parliament. Under Fiji's past parliamentary practices, bills introduced in parliament and referred to various committees lay exposed to divisive party politicking.

Allport (1954: 469) argues that legislations can affect prejudice and after drawing upon the history of legislative reforms in the US, Allport recommends that legislative reforms should be one of the avenues explored to promote inter-group tolerance. The Government of Fiji in 2006 should have utilised the committee approach for achieving consensus and making multiparty governance work. Since Fiji had a success story with multiparty committees in the past, it was important that the country legislated for an establishment of a permanent Multiparty Parliamentary Committee as a means for diminishing prejudice, discrimination, inter-group violence and in-group conflict. The role of the Joint Multiparty Parliamentary Committee is to engage in "democratic bargaining" (Kelso 2003: 57-76) and promote consensus with respect to draft bills and legislations. The selection of the members should be from parliament and not necessarily from those who are in cabinet. This way, there will be an even greater representation of parties in the legislative process.

In Fiji, the Joint parliamentary Committee should play a major role in all three stages of the legislative process, as in the case of Post-Soviet Lithuania, with draft bills before the

first reading, then, if needed, before the second and final third readings. Joint Parliamentary Committees should work in conjunction with the author of the draft, examine all the amendments, and engage in regular communication with relevant government ministries. Although a committee cannot “kill” a bill, it can present an alternative draft bill to the plenary, in addition to the one under review (Khmelko, Wise & Brown 2010: 77).

Once the final legislation is ready, the government introduces the bill in Parliament for debate. However, since consensus is already achieved at the Joint Multiparty Parliamentary Committee, the parliament becomes more a debating forum rather than the chamber for oppositional or adversarial politics. This way deliberative democracy is institutionalised and multiethnic aspirations are reconciled.

The Draft Peoples’ Charter for Change (2008) has recommended parliamentary committees as a means for fostering better inter-ethnic cooperation and reducing prejudice. The government led by Commodore Frank Bainimarama has pledged support for legislative reform but the new parliamentary structure will not be finalised until 2013. However, there is an appreciation, especially among the military led government of Fiji that legislative reforms can play a major role in addressing inter-group conflict in Fiji by providing political incentives to various ethnic groups to cooperate on national social and economic issues via multiracial political parties.

## 8.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued using Allport's ideas about national identity, truth and reconciliation and parliamentary committees for a three-pronged approach to resolving inter-group conflict in Fiji. Firstly, ideas about national identity as a means for addressing inter-group prejudice, I argue that a national identity would bind different ethnic communities by creating over time a national consciousness which evokes diversity within unity. This starts with an agreement on a common name of "Fijian" or "Fiji Islanders". However, as I have highlighted, Indigenous community leaders remained opposed to the use of "Fijian" as a common name, arguing that the term carries Indigenous cultural meaning. Indo-Fijians see the use of "Fijian" as a common name a vehicle for making them part of the nation, which has witnessed three race-based coups, especially targeted against the community. A common agreed name will contribute to better inter-group relations. Secondly, I utilise the idea of national therapy in the form of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission that will address past injustices, caused by Indigenous nationalist coups in Fiji. In examining the South African and the Northern Ireland experiences, I highlighted the difficulties faced by truth and reconciliation efforts and analysed Fiji's failed attempt at reconciliation through the Racial Tolerance and Unity Bill of 2005. I argued that unlike the South African approach, the nationalist government in Fiji attempted to utilise the Bill to pardon individuals involved in the coup of 2000. Taking in consideration the history of discrimination and violence in the country, I proposed an Amnesty Committee with powers to grant amnesty to perpetrators provided they told the truth and the victims were acknowledged and compensated for the

past trauma. Thirdly, Allport's analysis of the President's Committee on Civil Rights in 1947 is examined to propose the establishment of a committee system of government. Fiji's past successes with parliamentary committees and a growing appreciation in European and US democracies on the utility of committee systems to resolve policy, inter-group and inter-party issues could become a pivotal force in embedding consensus democracy. The three proposals form an interconnected nexus that have the ability to transform Fiji's political landscape and promote inter-group harmony.

## CONCLUSION

In keeping with Gordon Allport's theory on inter-group conflict, in particular inter-group discrimination, violence and extropunitive in-group solidarity, I reclaim history as a central tenant in the analysis of inter-group conflict in Fiji. I argued that Fiji has a history of inter-group conflict and there were a number of approaches to the study of Fiji, including discourse analysis, ethnography and critical theory. However, so far, none of the approaches have used inter-group theory as the analytical framework to examine the history of inter-group conflict in Fiji and seek its resolution.

The purpose of my methodology is to highlight the utility of Allport's inter-group theory, which identified stages of prejudice: discrimination, violence, extropunitive in-group solidarity and provided a proposal for inter-group conflict resolution. Allport argued that discrimination was socially constructed to enable dominant groups to maintain social and political hegemony over the out-groups. However, he qualified that the rationale for discrimination was conceptually defective, because it was based on general and often misguided categorical prejudgment of the out-group which evolved into physical violence. Allport analysed in detail violence against African Americans by members of the Ku Klux Klan and Nazi pogroms against the Jewish community. Through his analysis, Allport concluded that discrimination and violence led to extropunitive in-group solidarity in both the dominant group and the out-group.

According to Allport, there are two attributes of in-group solidarity: extropunitive and intropunitive. The extropunitive behaviour is characterised by in-group members isolating themselves from any form of interaction with the dominant group, whereas in the intropunitive setting, members of the in-group criticise their own group. Allport not only detailed the nature of prejudice in the United States but recommended strategies for inter-group conflict resolution by highlighting the utility of implementing national or common identity, national reconciliation and inclusive governance via a committee system. Allport's inter-group theory is not only relevant to the post-war United States but also for those countries that have deep ethnic divisions. Moreover, Allport's inter-group theory is grounded in history: the history of discrimination and violence against African Americans and the Jewish community in Europe.

While Allport's theory was embedded in the history of the United States and Europe, I utilised history as a method and analysed moments of history in Fiji that characterised Allport's institutional and structural discrimination, physical violence and fear of violence and extropunitive in-group solidarity. I have demonstrated that Fiji has a history of inter-group conflict among Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijians. In my application of inter-group theory, it was revealed that Indo-Fijians suffered structural and institutional discrimination following the coup of May 1987 where an elected multiracial government was overthrown by a military sympathetic to Indigenous Fijian nationalists. The military in Fiji removed Indo-Fijians from positions of authority, denied the community a voice in government and initiated a discriminatory constitution that relegated them to second-class citizens. The analysis of structural and institutional discrimination revealed that

Indigenous Fijians justified discriminating against Indo-Fijians by emphasising that the community had secret ambitions to alienate Indigenous Fijian land and control the economy. These justifications, I argued, did not hold to close scrutiny because it was conceptually defective. The multiracial government that was in office following the April 1987 election did not have plans to dismantle Indigenous land rights nor economically marginalise the Indigenous community as claimed by Indigenous nationalists.

The institutionalisation of discrimination increased prejudice against Indo-Fijians and this resulted in widespread violence against members of the community following the 2000 coup. The history of violence in 2000 against the Indo-Fijian community by Indigenous nationalists revealed that inter-group prejudice was widespread and that defenceless rural Indo-Fijian settlements were targeted by supporters of the 2000 coup. The 2000 coup leader used similar arguments that were used in 1987 in support of his action against the Peoples' Coalition Government and against Indo-Fijian generally. The widespread chaos created by Indigenous nationalists in 2000 led to the establishment of an Indigenous nationalist government, which re-instituted ethnic discrimination against Indo-Fijians. As a result, Indo-Fijians became inward focused and strengthened in-group ties.

In my analysis of violence, I argued that the physical violence and the fear of violence had a far reaching impact on the Indo-Fijian community. My analysis showed that inter-group discrimination and violence led to in-group solidarity. While Indo-Fijian extropunitive in-group solidarity was driven by fear of violence and past experience of physical violence, Indigenous Fijian nationalists in-group solidarity was premised upon deep ethnic prejudice against the Indo-Fijians, in particular a desire to continue with the

control of the state and positive discrimination in favour of the Indigenous community. However, extropunitive in-group solidarity in the Indigenous Fijian community was fractured by the Indigenous military that became intropunitive by questioning and later ousting the Indigenous nationalist government from power in a military coup in December 2006.

The re-interpretation of Fiji history within the analytical framework of inter-group theory revealed that inter-group conflict in Fiji was deeply embedded in the social fabric of the society. However, inter-group theory provided Fiji with an opportunity to mitigate inter-group tensions. First, using Allport's theory on inter-group conflict resolution, I argued for the establishment of a meaningful national character or national identity that allowed for the establishment of a single national identity devoid of any racial or ethnic identification. Second, I argued for national reconciliation among all ethnic groups for the past injustices and the process to be handled sensitively so that victims and perpetrators reconcile and move forward with the context of truth politics. The third approach involved strengthening the legislative framework around the committee system, which will permit political parties with opposing policies to utilise parliamentary framework in building consensus democracy and resolving conflict at the political level. I argued that Fiji has a history of successfully utilising multiparty committees to establish consensus in the past and that this committee framework could be utilised in the future to establish inter-group consensus. My recommendations, while reflecting some of the proposals contained in the Peoples' Charter (2008) provide a robust approach to addressing Fiji's complex inter-group problems. Moreover, my method, based on Allport's inter-group



theory creates a new epistemology for examining Fiji's history within the framework of inter-group theory. While Allport provides a comprehensive theoretical foundation for the study of inter-group conflict in Fiji, further research should be carried out on contrasting theoretical approaches to inter-group relations in Fiji. As highlighted by Leonie Huddy (2002b, 2004), the strengths and weaknesses of social dominance, social identity and system justification theories are required to be fleshed out in detail in order to leverage new and exciting approaches to the study of inter-group conflict. This thesis, nevertheless, has started the debate along these lines so that future approaches to inter-group conflict in Fiji becomes embedded in multidisciplinary methodologies.

Developing a methodology utilising social identity theory (Huddy 2001) is beyond the scope of this thesis but could be a proposal for future study on inter-group conflict in Fiji. Nevertheless, my use of history as a method for the study of inter-group conflict in Fiji has revealed the various historical moments that reflected aspects of Allport's inter-group theory on discrimination, violence and in-group solidarity which in turn offer the prospect of conflict resolution in the form of a common national identity, truth and reconciliation and multiparty parliamentary committees. Finally, this thesis has demonstrated that the application of inter-group theory to understanding inter-group conflict can generate mutually exclusive synergies between theory and context.

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### **Interviews**

Interview of 12 Indo-Fijian families which fled violence from areas that supported the George Speight coup was conducted at the victim's relative's homes in Suva in December 2000. The interview process and documentation was assisted by Social Action for Human Rights organisation (SAHARA).