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Gender and Militarization in Fiji

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Abstract

Fiji, a Pacific nation with established democratic tradition since independence in 1970, suffered four military coups between 1987 and 2006. The model of civil-military relations prior to, and following localization at independence, had bound the Fiji military in a close patronage relationship with Fiji's ruling chiefly class.

This research investigates the construction of gender norms in the militarization of Fiji through the military coups and consequent phases of militarization. Recognizing that gender inequality reinforces the exclusion and marginalization of women, the study underlines the perspective of women and their capacity to express agency in response to the differential impacts of militarization. A feminist intersectionality approach is utilised to examine the intersection of women's diverse experiences of militarization and how their positioning along multiple sites of social identities such as race and ethnicity, class and status, age, religion, location and sexuality among others, shape their responses to militarization.

The research highlights three key findings: the construction and manifestation of violent, culturally-sanctioned, masculinised, militarised norms and their intersection with other social identities particularly race and status during the coups; the prevalence of patronage relations among Fiji's ruling classes; and the capacity of women's agency in response to militarization. First, the military coups demonstrate culturally-sanctioned indigenous Fijian gender norms, that associate power with hegemonic forms of masculinity, aided by the military's monopoly over its legitimate access to arms and the use of force. Examining the paradox between two key post-independent roles of the Fiji military, its participation in global peacekeeping and the perpetration of local military coups, the study argues that Fiji's investment in 'masculinity' through peacekeeping as a foreign policy, has created a 'crisis' in masculinity due to the discrepancy between a soldier trained for combat being involved in peacekeeping. Returning peacekeepers have resorted to violence in the home to be able to cope with this 'crisis,' thus forcing women to bear the burden of violence, which parallels the burden that Fiji citizens have borne through the military coups at national level. Second, the prevalence of a patronage relationship between the chiefly ruling class and the military has benefited only a

select group to the detriment of the nation. While the coups were originally justified to restore power to the chiefly class, they instead became symptoms of the declining power and eventual demise of the chiefly institution, and its replacement by a military elite emboldened by the success of their coups through the chiefs' initial patronage. Third, women's exclusion from the excesses of the patron-client relations enabled them to develop and strengthen their capacity for political and social agency in response to the oppressive conditions of militarization, instead of seeing themselves as victims of circumstances beyond their control.

Dedication

In memory of *Ratu* and *Nana*, my parents

Ratu Samisoni Vakamino Golea and Vikatoria Savelaca Sorokibau Golea

My late siblings, Adi Kelera Tarogatuvu Ketewai and Ratu Viliame Rabalotu Golea

My niece and Yaca (namesake) who tragically lost her life in the final stages of this thesis

For my children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and their children,

with hopes for a brighter tomorrow.

Acknowledgement

I praise God for the opportunity and strength to pursue and finally complete this thesis. It has been a long journey but this latest version reflects my vision of what I wanted to say. As George Lucas of *Starwars* said, “Believe in your vision.”

This research has been informed by the pioneering work and writings on gender and militarization in Oceania by the late Dr Teresia Teaiwa, a woman of extraordinary wisdom, wit and rare talent, who lives on in her writings.

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LIST OF COMMON ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Amnesty International
ABC	Australia Broadcasting Commission
ANU	Australian National University
CAMV	Conservative Party Matanitu Vanua Party
CMF	Commonwealth Cease Fire Monitoring Force
CRW	Counter Warfare Revolutionary (Unit)
FAP	Fijian Association Party
FBC	Fiji Broadcasting Commission
FANC	French Armed Forces of New Caledonia
FICAC	Fiji Independent Commission against Corruption
FCRC	Fiji Constitutional Review Commission
FFP	Fiji First Party
FLP	Fiji Labour Party
FNCW	Fiji National Council of Women
FRIEND	Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises and Development
FWCC	Fiji Women's Crisis Centre
FWRM	Fiji Women's Rights Movement
GBV	Gender based violence
GCC (BLV)	Great Council of Chiefs (Bose Levu Vakaturaga)
INTERFET	International Force East Timor
IPV	Intimate partner violence
NCBBF	National Council for Building a better Fiji
NFP	National Federation Party
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NLUP	New Labour Unity Party
NZDF	New Zealand Defence Force
PANU	Party of National Unity
PCRC	Pacific Concerns Resource Centre
PDP	People's Democratic Party
PIF	Pacific Island Forum
PNGDF	Papua New Guinea Defence Force
PPSEAWA	Pan Pacific South East Asia Women's Association
PTSD	Post traumatic stress disorder
QEB	Queen Elizabeth Barracks

RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands
RFMF/FMF	Republic of Fiji Military Forces/Fiji Military Forces
SDA	Seventh Day Adventist church
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace and Research Institute
SVT	Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei (People's Coalition Party)
SDL	Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (People's United Party)
SODELPA	Social Democratic Liberal Party
SSVM	Soqooqo Vakamarama I Taukei (Indigenous Women's Association)
STC	'Soldier- turn- civilian' model
TSM	Temporary special measures
UNAMI	United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq
UNDOF	United Nations Disengagement Observer Force
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon
UNIKOM	UN Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission
UNOSOM	UN Operations in Somalia
UNTAES	UN Transitional Admin. for E. Slavonia, Baraja and W. Sirnium
UNTAET	United Nations Transition Assistance East Timor
UNTAG	UN Transition Assistance Group
UPP	United People's Party
VAW	Violence against women
VKB	Vola ni Kawa Bula (Indigenous Fijian Register)
VLV	Veitokani ni Lewenivanua Va-Karisito Party (Christian Democratic Party)
UNO	United Nations Organisation

GLOSSARY

Fijian	English
<i>valataki vanua</i>	battle of the nations
<i>cibi</i>	a dance of triumph after combat. Since 1939 it has come to mean a brief dance of combative challenge performed by Fiji's national rugby team before a major match.
<i>Bati</i>	warrior caste, usually referring to a traditionally specialised clan serving a chief.
<i>Talanoa</i>	n. story, v. story-telling
<i>vulagi</i>	guest-visitor status
<i>tara-koro</i>	community building
<i>Turaga-bati</i>	(chief-warrior) ideology
<i>i Taukei</i>	itaukei n. owner of something, n. native (of Fiji), a polite way of referring to indigenous Fijians
<i>turaga</i>	chief
<i>vanua</i>	vanua n. territory, land
<i>vasu</i>	Traditionally, in the mother's village of origin, it is the offspring who are called 'vasu' and they could make demands for services or goods from the village, especially from their mother's brothers (momo or uncle);
<i>Vulagi</i>	vulagi n. visitor, guest, also refers to people in Fiji who do not qualify as indigenous Fijians (iTaukei), though they may have been born in Fiji and lived all their lives there for several generations

[Translation follows Gatty, R. 2009. Fijian-English dictionary, Suva, Fiji]

CHAPTER 1

GENDER AND MILITARIZATION IN FIJI

Introduction

Gender and Militarization: An Overview

Fiji gained independence on 10 October 1970, following ninety-six (96) years as a British colony. Within four decades of independence however, Fiji was rocked by four military coups, the first two in 1987, then in 2000 and 2006, which destabilised the country and inflicted disastrous consequences on Fiji's economic, political and social development.

This research investigates the gendered construction of militarised masculinity in the context of these military coups and consequent militarization processes between 1987 and 2006. This focus recognises that gender inequality reinforces the marginalization and absence of women from key decision-making processes during the coups, in post-coup, and as a result of the impact of militarization.¹ This thesis shall also examine the capacity of women to express agency under the oppressive militarised conditions, instead of viewing themselves as victims of circumstances beyond their control, that contributes to militarised masculinities.

The term 'gender' broadly refers to socially constructed assumptions, attitudes and expectations about masculine and feminine roles and behaviour in society.² More explicitly, 'gender' is defined as the "social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys."³ Since the expectations, attitudes and relationships are 'socially constructed' through the socialization process, they are 'context-specific,' time-bound' and therefore changeable.⁴

This study acknowledges the limitation of 'gender' in privileging the differences between women and men in their experience and response to militarization, that risks ignoring the differences among women and among men themselves. To address this, a more inclusive

¹ See, Nicholl, R. 2008. Women, the Press and the Fiji coups d'état. *Fijian Studies: A Journal of Contemporary Fiji*, Vol. 6 (1/2);

² Farr, V. 2006. *Gender Analysis as a tool for Multilateral Negotiators in the Small Arms Context*, in UNIDIR. *Disarmament as Humanitarian Action: From Perspective to Practice*, Geneva, p.109

³ United Nations Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) Gender toolkit (2012), in https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/GenderToolkit1_121205_5_ver7.pdf

⁴ Ibid, See also www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm .

feminist intersectionality framework is applied to explore the diversity of experiences between women and men, and among women themselves. This would prevent homogenising the experiences of certain categories of women such as those in higher status or privileged positions, as applicable for all women in Fiji, or misinterpreting men's experiences of militarization as relevant for women as well.

Feminist intersectionality examines the intersection of militarization and the multiple positioning of women and men along the various sites of social identities and relations which, apart from gender, includes race and ethnicity, status and class, age, religion, ability and sexuality, among others. These social identities influence women and men's experiences and responses to militarization, as individuals or collectively. As Collins explains, understanding the social position of women and men from the perspective of intersectionality opens up the "possibility of seeing and understanding many more spaces of cross-cutting interests," where systems of inequality come together.⁵ An intersectional gender analysis is therefore critical in the study of militarization because it allows for a more nuanced understanding of the various forms of power relations at play, particularly where systems of inequality intersect.

'Militarism' is understood in this study as a broad ideology that creates "a culture of fear and supports the use of violence, aggression and military intervention to settle conflicts and enforce economic and political interests,"⁶ which closely reflect the conditions of militarism that prevailed in Fiji following the coups. 'Militarism' is used interchangeably with 'militarization,' which is a process in which military values, ideology and behaviour achieve a dominating influence on the political, social, economic and external affairs of the state.⁷

An indicator of a highly militarised state is the size of its military budget. In 2017, the total world military expenditure was estimated by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) to be US\$1.739 billion, which attests to the global economic burden of

⁵ Collins, Patricia Hill. *Intersecting Oppressions*, in https://uk.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/13299_Chapter_16_Web_Byte_Patricia_Hill_Collins.pdf

⁶ See www.now.org/news/blogs/index.php/sayit/2010/12/10/an-insidious-combination-militarism-and-gendered-violence in Nario-Galace, J. 2014. *Women's Agency against Guns* in *Gender and Militarism: Analysing the Links to Strategize for Peace*. Women Peacemakers Program, May 24 Action Pack 2014, pp 11-12

⁷ Burke, Colleen. *Women and Militarism*. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) publication in <http://www.wilpfinternational.org/publications/womenmilitarism.htm>

militarization in the world.⁸ This is cause for concern in this research, as it implies that the search for peaceful solutions to conflicts around the world remains undermined in favour of “military” solutions as the “default solution” to every conflict.⁹ As shall be examined in the coup chapters, the SIPRI military database revealed a sharp increase in Fiji’s military budgets during the years following each coup, as the military regime took control of political governance by force of arms.¹⁰ Investing in militarization diverts scarce resources away from sustainable livelihood programmes that could help reduce or address poverty and unemployment, natural disasters and humanitarian crises, and peace-building alternatives to armed violence and conflicts.

The global and regional impacts of militarism in the Pacific saw parts of the Solomon Islands and Bougainville being exploited as battle sites between the Allied forces and Japanese troops during the Second World War. Alexander notes that World War 2 brought intense fighting to many Pacific islands, leading to the creation of military bases, military economies and military-support activities such as prostitution.¹¹

From the mid-to late 1950s, colonial powers exploited their Pacific colonies as nuclear testing grounds, making the Pacific one of the most highly militarised regions in the world.¹² Between 1955 and 1961, the United States tested its nuclear weapons on Bikini atoll, Marshall Islands and the Northern Pacific, while the British conducted nuclear tests on Christmas Island between 1958 and 1960, involving Fijian, New Zealand and British naval personnel. France unleashed its nuclear testing programmes on Fangataufa and Mururoa atolls in French Polynesia from 1966 to 1996.¹³ These nuclear programmes gravely endangered the lives and health of Pacific people from irradiation, threatened peace and

⁸SIPRI 2017. SIPRI Yearbook. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁹ Rees, M. 2015. Military intervention in Yemen: The international system in crisis, in Open Democracy 50-50 article, in <http://wilpf.org/madeleine-rees-on-yemen-and-the-crisis-in-the-international-system/>

¹⁰ SIPRI, 2018. SIPRI Military Expenditure database in local currency, 1988-2017; in https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2_Data%20for%20all%20countries%20from%201988-2017%20in%20local%20currency.pdf

¹¹ Alexander, 2008, p.5; see also Enloe, C. 1990. Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist sense of International Politics, Berkeley: University of California Press.

¹² Maclellan, N. 2014. Banning Nuclear Weapons: A Pacific Islands Perspective. Australia: ICAN (International Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons). Nuclearization of the Pacific saw the US test

¹³ Tubanavau-Salabula L., Namoce, J. Mclellan, N. 1999. Kirisimasi: Fijian troops at Britain’s Christmas Island nuclear tests. Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC): Suva;

security, internally displaced and uprooted indigenous people from their lands and ocean resources and hindered sustainable human and economic development.¹⁴

Power relation was manifested through the dominance of the 'masculine' colonial superpowers against the defenceless, subordinate and hence 'feminized' colonised indigenous peoples.¹⁵ As Feffer explains:

shaped by gender, these hierarchical colonial relationships can be seen in military exploitation of host communities ...the exploitation of women and children through the sex industry, sexual violence and rape. Women's bodies, the land, and indigenous communities are all feminized, treated as dispensable and temporary.¹⁶

In such an unequal relationship, what is constructed as "civilised, white, male, western" is held to be superior to what is perceived as "primitive, non-white, non-western, indigenous and female,"¹⁷ which clearly reflected the intersection between militarism and colonialism in the Pacific.

Forty-three years after World War II ended, a ten-year civil war erupted in Bougainville between the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA). Labelled as the "crisis," the civil war between 1988 and 1998 left more than 12,000 dead, and thousands more injured and traumatised, including women who died giving birth in the bushes due to a blockade of demarcated "rebel areas."¹⁸ A similar "crisis" in the Solomon Islands between 1999 and 2003, escalated when rival factions gained access to weapons and used them against rival groups. An estimated 200 people died, with many more injured and over 10,000 people internally displaced.¹⁹ The newly installed government collapsed under duress, which led to an appeal for assistance to the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) under the mechanism of the Biketawa

¹⁴ Pacific Small Arms Action Group (PSAAG) Briefing Paper 2010, p. 1

¹⁵ Feffer, John (ed). 2008. Gender and U.S. Military bases in Asia-Pacific. Foreign Policy in Focus in, [http://www. fpif.org](http://www.fpif.org)

¹⁶ Feffer, 2008

¹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸ Helen Hakena, Executive Director of Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency, of Buka, Bougainville. A personal 'talanoa' in Suva, Fiji in 2012.

¹⁹ Alpers, Philp and Conor Twyford. (2003) Small Arms in the Pacific, Occasional Paper No. 8, Small Arms Survey: Geneva, p.1.

Declaration.²⁰ In response, an Australian-led military occupation force known as the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) was deployed from June 2003 to 2017.²¹ It comprised other Pacific island personnel keen to support the nation's long-term recovery in law, justice, security sector and economic reforms.²² At around the same time that Fiji was bracing itself for another coup in late 2006, riots broke out in the Tongan capital Nukualofa in November, where hundreds of youths looted and burned sections of the capital, which left six people dead and destroyed eighty percent (80%) of the Central Business District (CBD). In response to an appeal by the Tongan Prime Minister, the New Zealand and Australian governments deployed 155 soldiers and police officers to assist the Tongan security forces bring the situation under control.²³

The case of Fiji differs however, as it illustrates how its own military force, comprising over ninety percent ethnic Fijian men, had exerted hegemonic control over the political, social and cultural institutions through four military *coups d'état* between 1987 and 2006.

Luttwak (1969) defines a *coup d'état* as "the infiltration of a small but critical segment of the state apparatus to displace the government from its control of the remainder."²⁴ Samuel Finer (1969) similarly defines 'military intervention in politics' as the "armed forces' constrained substitution of its own policies and or persons, for those of recognised civilian authorities."²⁵ In each coup, we witnessed how senior military officers or elements within the military have resorted to force of arms to seize, oust or usurp power from elected political leaders.

This study acknowledges the military's ability to conduct the coups through two key sources of power: its monopoly over the armoury and its access to violence as the state's

²⁰ The Biketawa Declaration was endorsed in October 2000 at the 31st Pacific Island Forum Meeting in Biketawa, Kiribati, in direct response to the situation in Fiji and the Solomon Islands, as a mechanism for Forum members to assist or intervene in times of conflict or crisis for fellow members.

²¹ Amnesty International, Solomon Islands: A Forgotten Conflict, ASA 43/ 005/2000, September 7, 2000. See also Tarcisius Kabutaulaka, "Beyond Ethnicity: Understanding the Crisis in the Solomon Islands," Pacific News Bulletin, May 2000; and Oxfam Community Aid Abroad (CAA), Australian Intervention in the Solomons: Beyond Operation Helpem Fren (Melbourne: Oxfam CAA, 2003).

²² About RAMSI, information available on RAMSI website, <http://www.ramsi.org/about/what-is-ramsi.html>

²³ Harman, Mike. 2008. Tonga Riots 2006, Discussion of the Tonga riots and background, in <http://www.libcom.org/history/tonga-riots-2006>

²⁴ Luttwak, Edward. 1969. Coup d'état: A practical handbook. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, p.12; see also, Scobbel, A. 1994: p.187;

²⁵ Finer, S. 1962. The Man on Horseback: the role of the military in politics. London: Pall Mall Press, p. 23

legitimate instrument of violence through armed force. The failure of Speight's coup to gain control over the "political centre" in 2000, was due in part to its inability to secure the armoury which was still held by the military, despite arms being smuggled into the Parliamentary complex by rebel soldiers who were holding the politicians hostage.

In the lead-up to the 2006 coup, armed soldiers were seen riding through the streets of Suva, as gun-toting soldiers marched through the streets, instilling fear and intimidation over unarmed civilians.²⁶ Myrtilinen suggests that such public display of weapons is an "integral part of a violent, militarized model of masculinity that sanctions the use of aggression, force and violence."²⁷

Through the military coups, the coup makers and their military and civilian 'enablers' were able to establish a new political order in which a new military elite has replaced their political masters and the military's former patrons, the ruling chiefly class. Any attempt therefore to address the "culture of coups" in Fiji must consider the military's monopoly over arms and the use of armed force under civil-military relations. The gendered links between notions of masculinity and guns in the military coups, are investigated in this study as part of the larger ideological, political and cultural manifestations of gender and militarization in Fiji.

The pervasive influence of militarization in the social and cultural facets of Fijian society is further displayed in sports, language, education and culture.²⁸ The entrenched influence of the military for example, extends to the game of rugby, popularly regarded as Fiji's national sport, and exhibits similar notions of masculinity.²⁹ In fact, the very first rugby match was played in Fiji in 1884 between European soldiers and Fijian soldiers of the Native Constabulary, the colonial precursor to Fiji's military force.³⁰ Ratuva notes the use of militaristic language in rugby, such as the reference to test matches as "*valataki vanua*"

²⁶ Squires, Nick. 5/12/ 2006. Armed soldiers take control in Fiji coup; in <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1536097/Armed-soldiers-take-control-in-Fiji-coup.html>

²⁷ Myrtilinen, H. 2003: Disarming Masculinities, in Disarmament Forum (Four), p.37

²⁸ Teiawa, 2005, 2008;

²⁹ Fiji Rugby Union (FRU) website, www.fijirugby.com states under 'FRU History' that Fiji is one of the few countries in the world where rugby is the principal sport.

³⁰ Fiji Rugby Union (FRU) website, www.fijirugby.com states under 'FRU History' that Fiji is one of the few countries in the world where rugby is the principal sport.

(battle of the nations)³¹ and the performance of the '*cibi*,' a traditional war dance, prior to a test match to invoke courage as in battle.³²

During preparations for previous world cup matches, Fiji's national rugby sevens teams and the rugby league team known as '*Bati*' (*Warriors*) have participated in boot camps, military drills and training at the military barracks in Nabua, Suva.³³ Senior military officers or military appointees have served as President or Chairman of the Fiji Rugby Union (FRU) especially following a coup. These have included Voreqe Bainimarama who was army commander and became interim prime minister following his 2006 coup,³⁴ and Mosese Tikoitoga who took over as military commander from Bainimarama.³⁵ The current Fiji Rugby Union chairman is Francis Kean, a former naval officer, current head of the Corrections Services and Bainimarama's brother in law.³⁶ This indicates the desire of military leaders to seize control of rugby in Fiji, as an institution with similar notions of masculinism.

Yet another manifestation of militarization that continues to gain popularity following each military coup and which shall be examined under Chapter 8 on women's agency, is the increasing demand for the cadet training scheme in schools, more recently by all girls' schools and Indo-Fijian schools. The Fiji military websites notes that the RFMF "will continue to embark on nurturing young lives into mature and successful adults through its Schools Cadet Training program."³⁷ Many parents and teachers have applauded the scheme as a means of instilling "discipline" among school students.³⁸ However, a number of interviewees, especially former school teachers, have expressed concern that the scheme is just another form of militarization of young people in schools.

³¹ As quoted by Teaiwa, 2005, p.203

³² An ancient war chant similar to the Maori '*haka*.' See also Teaiwa, 2005, p.203;

³³ Newspaper article: Fijilive, Sept 28, 2008. *Military style training for Fiji Bati*, in <http://fijilive.com/fijilive-printstory.Fijilive?s5404.Fijilive>; see also, Fiji Times article: Kumar, R. 2013. 'Boot camp for 7s team', Fiji Times front page on Wed. 5/6/2013

³⁴ Fijilive, April 25 2015, 'PM leads, FRU new board and profits.'

³⁵ Radio New Zealand, 29 August 2011. 'Fiji Rugby Union chairman denied entry to NZ' in www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/83794/fiji-rugby-union-chairman-denied-entry-to-nz

³⁶ Fiji Sun online, 26/11/2016, in <http://fijisun.com.fj/2016/11/26/fiji-rugby-awards-night-great-idea-congratulations-to-kean-and-board/>

³⁷ Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) website, <http://www.rfmf.mil.fj/news/>

³⁸ See for example, Fiji Times online, Wed. April 28, 2010. 'School cadet program instills discipline in students' daily life; see also a newspaper article by journalist, Torika Tokalau, 2013. 'Principal recommends cadet training in schools' Fiji Times online, Friday, Sept 13, 2013;

A former high school teacher states her concern,

The infusion of military values and ideology into the educational system in Fiji reinforces and sustains a culture of militarization in the daily psyche of Fijian youths and society as a whole.³⁹

A key concern of this study on militarization in Fiji, is the paradox between soldiers who are trained for combat being involved in peacekeeping, creating what Whitworth refers to as a “crisis in masculinity.”⁴⁰ Such a “crisis” manifests itself when returning peacekeepers break the peace at home by perpetrating the coups, and resorting to violence in the home to cope with the “crisis,” thus forcing women to bear the burden of violence as a cost of peacekeeping. The battering husband in the home therefore parallels the violent coup maker at the national level.

The over-representation of ethnic Fijian men in the military who are deployed on global peacekeeping missions and then return home to perpetrate the military coups, point to the close links between the Fiji military force as a masculine institution and the indigenous Fijian social system in which a culture of violence, dominance and force are pervasive in both. It also confirms that a political system and social structure that bestows such disproportionate influence and privilege on a state military, should not be surprised when it begins to entrench the same patterns of gendered privilege throughout society, as the Fiji military has done through the four coups in two decades.

Finally for the dual purpose of this study, the influence of ethnic, cultural behaviour and expectations in the construction of hegemonic forms of masculinity in the home, the community and the military, shall be juxtaposed against the capacity of ethnic Fijian women to express agency in response to the oppressive ‘militarised, masculinised and ethicised’ conditions following the coups.

Thesis Rationale

The succession of coups in Fiji has generated the notion that the country now suffers from a “coup syndrome,” “coup culture” or even a “coup crisis.”⁴¹ While the two early coups

³⁹ Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC). 2007. Unpublished Report on People’s Consultation for an Arms Trade Treaty. Suva, Fiji; see also Teaiwa, 2006, p. 6

⁴⁰ Whitworth, S. 2004.

⁴¹ Tarte, S. 2009. Reflections on Fiji’s ‘coup culture,’ in Fraenkel, J., Firth S., and Lal, B. (eds). The 2006 Military takeover in Fiji: a coup to end all coups? Canberra: ANU E-Press, Ch.27: pp 409-414;

(1987, 2000) were justified to restore power to indigenous Fijians and their chiefs, perceived to have lost the 1987 and 1999 elections, the coups had changed forever the dynamics of civil-military relations and inter-racial relations in the young nation. In turn, the long-standing patronage relations between the ruling chiefs and senior military officers that had existed since independence had now transformed, with the chiefs now beholden to the military in the post-coup period.

Early scholarly coup analyses provided mostly descriptive and narrative accounts on the background, motivations and consequences of the coups,⁴² while others focused on the economic, cultural and political dynamics of the coups.⁴³ A number of early analyses attributed the coups to racial or inter-ethnic relations and ethno-nationalism, by casting their origins to the colonial policy of racial segregation.⁴⁴ Sanday argues that an ethnic analysis must take into account civil-military relations, the influence of social class and the role and position of the military in relation to chiefly patronage which had rendered the military susceptible to political manipulation.⁴⁵ Both Halapua and Sanday view the coups from a class analysis, as symptoms of the widening gap between the rich and poor classes of both races,⁴⁶ while Halapua contends that the coups could be closely identified by an alliance between a proportion of ethnic Fijian middle class with the Fijian chiefly aristocracy.⁴⁷

This thesis argues however, that accounting for the coups and consequent militarization from a purely ethnic, ethno-nationalist or class analysis, risks 'essentialising' ethnicity or class, at the expense of gender. It ignores the fact that the Fiji military, with its predominantly ethnic Fijian composition, is a hegemonic masculine institution that is

⁴² Teaiwa, T. 2008. On Women and Indians: The politics of Inclusion and Exclusion in Militarized Fiji, in Sutton, B., Morgen, S. and Norkov, J. (eds). *Security disarmed: critical perspectives on gender, race, and militarisation*. New Jersey: Rutgers State University Press; For accounts on the 1987 coups, see Ritova and Dean, 1988; Chand and Naidu, 1997; Lal, 1988, 1998; Robertson and Tamanisau, 1988; Accounts on the 2000 coup, see Robertson and Sutherland, 2001; Lal and Pretes, 2001; Robertson, 2000; Field, Baba and Nabobo, 2005; For account of the 2006 coup, see Fraenkel, J., Firth, S. and Lal, B. (eds). 2009. *The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: A coup to end all coups?* Canberra: ANU E-Press;

⁴³ See, Ratuva, 2000; Teaiwa, 2005; 2008;

⁴⁴ See for example, Norton, 1988; Naidu, 1991;

⁴⁵ Sanday, 1991: p. 24;

⁴⁶ Halapua, 2003: p.34;

⁴⁷ Halapua, W.2002. *The role of militarism in the politics of Fiji*. Unpublished PhD thesis. Dept. of Sociology, U.S.P.: Suva, p.3

sustained by a gendered ideology based on power, domination, aggression, masculinity and armed force.⁴⁸

Aims and Objectives

This thesis has two objectives. First, it seeks to investigate the construction of ‘militarised masculinity’ in the perpetration of the military coups and consequent militarization processes between 1987 and 2006. It does this by exploring the manifestation of violent, culturally-sanctioned masculinist norms during each coup period, and how these gender norms intersect with other social identities particularly race and status, to reinforce a ‘hegemonic, militarised and masculinised’ model of male privilege among Fijian men in the military, to perpetrate the coups and inflict atrocities against the rest of society. The study probes the links between the Fijian cultural-social system and the military, where a pervasive culture of violence, dominance, force and control, are prevalent in both. This is further demonstrated by an over-representation of ethnic Fijian men in the military, who are deployed on global peacekeeping missions, and return home to inflict violence on women and children in the home, and perpetrate the military coups at national level. This study affirms what feminist militarization experts like Enloe⁴⁹ argue, that a political and social system that allows its ethnic and masculinised state military to wield such strong influence and privilege, can expect to find the same patterns of gendered privilege being displayed against the rest of society, as the Fiji military has done through four military coups in two decades. Furthermore, this study recognises that gender inequality reinforces the marginalization and absence of women from key decision-making processes during the coups, post-coup and as a result of the impact of militarisation.⁵⁰ The second objective therefore examines the capacity of women to be able to express agency under the oppressive militarised conditions that contribute to militarised masculinities, instead of viewing themselves as victims of circumstances beyond their control.

Research Questions

Two key questions underpin this research: First, how is ‘militarised masculinism’ constructed and reinforced in the militarization of Fiji through the military coups between

⁴⁸ Karamanou, A. 2007. The gender dimension in international politics. *Greek Journal of International and European Politics*, Issue 5 (April), p.2;

⁴⁹ Enloe, Cynthia. 1980. *Ethnic soldiers: state security in divided societies*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

⁵⁰ See, Nicholl, R. 2008. Women, the Press and the Fiji coups d’etat. *Fijian Studies: A Journal of Contemporary Fiji*, Vol. 6 (1/2);

1987 and 2006? This is guided by the following sub-questions: What is the role of other intersectional identities such as race and ethnicity, status and class, age, religion, ability and sexuality, in the gendered militarization of Fiji? What historical factors have contributed to the evolving role of the military in civilian affairs, and how have these contributed to shifting gender and intersectional identities and relations? The second key question which shall guide the second objective is: How does a feminist intersectional approach contribute to an understanding of the gendered impacts of militarization, and on Fijian women's capacity to express agency?

Answers to these questions will enhance our understanding of how militarised masculinity is constructed and reinforced over and over again during the series of coups in Fiji, and to be able to recognise and understand the role of women and their ability to express agency under the oppressive conditions of militarism.

Situating the Thesis

This thesis seeks to deepen the gender analysis of militarization in Fiji, by applying a feminist/gender intersectionality framework to investigate the intersection between militarization and the social positioning of women and men along the multiple and intersecting sites of social identities and relations that reinforce gender. These social identities include race and ethnicity, class and status, age, religion, ability and sexuality, among others. Understanding the social positioning of women and men based on their intersecting relations and how these shape or reinforce their responses to militarization,⁵¹ can help to identify the cross-cutting spaces where systems of inequality intersect in their experiences of militarization.⁵² Such a perspective has remained neglected in contemporary coup discourse, notwithstanding the scholarly analyses outlined below.⁵³

⁵¹ Muhanna, A. 2013. *When the Researcher becomes a subject of ethnographic research: Studying "myself" and "others" in Gaza*, in *Women's Studies International Forum* 45 (2014), 112

⁵² Collins, Patricia Hill. *Intersectional Oppressions*, in https://uk.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/13299_Chapter_16_Web_Byte_Patricia_Hill_Collins.pdf

⁵³ See for example: Lateef, S. 1990. *Current and future implications of the coups in Fiji*. *The Contemporary Pacific*, Vol. 2 (1) pp 113-130; Griffen, A. (ed) 1990. *With heart and nerve and sinew: post-coup writings from Fiji*. Suva, Fiji; Teaiwa, T. 2008. *"On Women and "Indians": The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion in Militarized Fiji*, in Sutton, B., Morgen S., and Norvkov, J. (eds) *Security disarmed: critical perspectives on gender, race and militarization*. New Jersey: Rutgers State University Press; Teaiwa, T. 2005. *Articulated Cultures: Militarism and Masculinities in Fiji during the mid-1990s*. *Fijian Studies*, Vol. 3 (2): 201-222;

This research builds on studies by respected scholars such as Teaiwa,⁵⁴ Lateef,⁵⁵ Griffen,⁵⁶ and Alexander (2006),⁵⁷ who have examined the triple dimensions of gender, race and class as intersecting dimensions of inequality on the impact of the coups on women. Lateef argues for example, that while the politics of gender posed grave threats to women's economic position in the post-1987 economic recession, it was further compounded for Indo-Fijian women by the politics of ethnicity.⁵⁸ Teaiwa investigates the politics of inclusion and exclusion of women and Indo-Fijian men from the Fiji military. A recent historical study by Teaiwa on feminism and militarism in Fiji, examines the motivations for women to join the Fiji military in the 1980s and the British army in the early 1960s.⁵⁹ Alexander's study on the intersection of gender, race, and social status on women following the coups in Fiji, notes in particular the historical influences of colonialism in the construction of these intersecting inequalities for women.⁶⁰ She points in particular at how indigenous women of chiefly status have access to certain privileges and power that do not extend to women (and men) of lower status.⁶¹ Hence, Fijian women of high status do have access to hegemonic positions of authority that are equivalent to male hegemonic power over other men and women of lower status.

Two critical references on the impact of the coups and militarization on women in Fiji must also be acknowledged. One is Nicholl's analysis of the media coverage of women during the coups, which show that women who oppose the coups and highlight issues that affect women and children during the coups, received better media coverage following the 2000 and 2006 coups, compared to women like Rokotuivuna who had displayed resistance in the 1987 coup.⁶² The second is George's excellent historical account of women's activism from post-colonial to post-independence, and in particular her reference to the ability of women

⁵⁴ Teaiwa, T. 2008. "On Women and "Indians": The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion in Militarized Fiji, in Sutton, B., Morgen S., and Norvkvov, J. (eds) *Security disarmed: critical perspectives on gender, race and militarization*. New Jersey: Rutgers State University Press

⁵⁵ Lateef, S. 1990. *Current and future implications of the coups in Fiji*. The Contemporary Pacific, Vol. 2 (1) pp 113-130

⁵⁶ Griffen, A. (ed) 1990. *With heart and nerve and sinew: post coup writings from Fiji*. Suva, Fiji

⁵⁷ Alexander, R. 2006. *Political Violence in the South Pacific: women after the coups in Fiji*. Journal of International Cooperation Studies, Vol 14 (1), p.5

⁵⁸ Lateef, S. 1990. *Current and future implications of the coups in Fiji*

⁵⁹ Teaiwa, T. 2010. What makes women soldiers? Fiji Women Soldiers: Oral histories and Feminist Analysis, in American Historical Association.

⁶⁰ Alexander, 2006.

⁶¹ Alexander, 2006.

⁶² Nicholl, R. Women, the Press and the Fiji Coups d'etat. *Fijian Studies*, Vol. 6 (1 & 2), pp 87-109;

to express agency during the post-coup periods.⁶³ As Teiawa notes in her review, “George has covered some of the more complex issues of race, ethnicity and culture that have shaped the ability of women in Fiji to engage in national and international forums of agenda-setting and decision making.”⁶⁴ Indeed, this thesis has been informed by both George’s and Teiawa’s works especially on similar issues highlighted in this thesis on women’s agency, gender, militarization and activism.

Significance of Research

This study complements the contributions of Teiawa (2005, 2008), Lateef (1990), Alexander (2006) and George (2012) on gender, militarization and women’s agency, but goes further by analysing all three coups, and offers insight into the intersection between militarization, gender and other social identities particularly race, ethnicity, class and status, religion, age, sexuality and location, which reinforce women and men’s experiences and responses to the impact of the coups and militarization. By examining the intersection between militarism, masculinism, feminism (gender) and other social identities, we are able to gain a broader understanding of the impact of the coups and militarization on diverse groups of ethnic Fijian women and men, whose experiences and responses are shaped by their social positioning and intersectional identities.

Secondly, by situating the historical contexts and tracing the evolvement of the processes of militarization, masculination, feminisation (gender) and ethnicisation (identity and racial politics), this research can contribute to a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of key historical events. These include the advent of Christianity, cession, colonialism, “girmitya,” racism, independence, nation-building, global peacekeeping and the coups, which indicate that such events do not happen in isolation, but have an influence on later events. This study therefore goes beyond existing coup analyses that focus specifically on class, race, ethnicity, ethno-nationalism, gender intersectionality or civil military relations among others. A third contribution of this research is its transferability or applicability across comparative national contexts such as the Pacific, so readers can relate the findings in this study to their own country-specific research. Finally, when I first embarked on this thesis, I had aimed at being able to bridge the ‘divide’ between academia and civil society activism, by “examining the ways in which we can strengthen our areas

⁶³ George, Nicole. 2012. *Situating Women: Gender Politics and Circumstances in Fiji*. ANU E-Press: Canberra;

⁶⁴ Teiawa, T. Review of ‘Situating Women: Gender Politics and Circumstance in Fiji,’ by George Nicole. *Journal of Pacific History*, 50 (1): pp 99-101

of work rather than remaining divided and often suspicious of each other.”⁶⁵ Apart from its academic utility, this research can be a useful tool to ‘inform’ the policy advocacy of two key women’s social movements I have been involved with, namely the women’s rights movement with its goals of gender equality and women’s empowerment, and the peace and disarmament movement with its vision for a safer, secure and peaceful Fiji, Pacific and world, that promotes peaceful, non-violent and non-military alternatives to conflicts. As Dr Martin Luther King asserts, “non-violence is a way of life for courageous people.”⁶⁶

This thesis has set out with a dual purpose: to contribute to a gender intersectional analysis of militarization by examining the construction of ‘militarised masculinity’ in the coups and in the militarization of Fiji; and to highlight the capacity of women to be able to express agency under the oppressive militarised coup and post-coup conditions. This study hopes that women and men would become better informed and empowered to challenge the root causes of militarised gender violence at the heart of the coups and militarization, for a more equal, just and peaceful society.

Thesis Outline

This research consists of nine chapters:

Chapter 1 presents an overview of the key concepts of ‘gender’ and ‘militarisation,’ in the topic of this thesis, ‘Gender and Militarisation in Fiji.’ It examines the diverse manifestations of militarisation in the Pacific region and contrasts these against the situation of militarisation in Fiji, where its own military, comprising predominantly indigenous Fijian men, has perpetrated four military coups by usurping political power between 1987 and 2006. The chapter discusses the thesis rationale, aims and objectives of the study, and the key research questions. It situates the thesis in the field of feminist research on gender and militarism in the Pacific, and discusses its claim to significance when placed alongside other significant works on the topic. It ends with an overview of the nine chapters of this thesis.

Chapter 2 describes the theoretical framework of feminism and feminist theory that underpin this research. In particular, it highlights ‘feminist intersectionality’ as a framework with which to examine women’s experiences of militarisation and its

⁶⁵ Bradford, S. 2014. Building Left Power in Aotearoa-Beyond the Academic-Activist Divide. Social Movement Network Seminar series, New Horizon Women Trust website:

⁶⁶ The Martin Luther King Jr Centre for Nonviolent Social Change. The King Philosophy, in www.thekingcentre.org/king-philophy

intersection with women's multiple positioning along the matrix of social identities such as race and ethnicity, status and class, age, religion, ability and sexuality, etc. It probes the various strands of feminism and how they inform the diversity of women's experiences, and the relevance of black feminist thought and third world feminism in influencing the transferability and applicability of Fijian women's experiences to other similar contexts. It then frames the Fiji study in the context of the concepts of 'feminism' and 'militarism.'

Chapter 3 builds on five key principles of feminist research practice⁶⁷ to guide the methodological approach and design, and the method of data collection and analysis. A 'qualitative' approach is utilized, which includes a semi-structured interview method to gather in-depth knowledge of selected women participants in Fiji, and the less formal but more popular unstructured indigenous method of '*talanoa*,' (story telling) and '*tarakoro*' (community building), through which women are able to tell their own stories at the informal level. Other sources of information utilised in this study are: content and textual analysis of government reports, policies and documents, non-government organisation workshop and conference reports and submissions to governmental and inter-governmental agencies such as the UN, viewpoints and opinions of men and women who shape opinion in society, and media reports and press releases.

Chapter 4 provides a historical context and analysis of the factors that have contributed to militarisation and the evolving interventionist role of the military in Fiji's political affairs, from pre-contact, colonial, post-colonial era and independence. The post-colonial era is investigated through the nation-building processes at independence and in particular, Fiji's investment in "masculinity" through the offer of Fijian troops for global peacekeeping. The paradox between two main post-independent preoccupations of the Fiji military, which are global peacekeeping and local military coups, is introduced here, for further analysis in the later chapters. This chapter affirms the interconnectedness between past events that shape future events in the coups and militarisation.

Chapter 5 investigates the construction of militarised masculinity in the military coups of 1987 and consequent process of militarisation. First, it provides a gender intersectionality

⁶⁷ Following Taylor (1998), these include a focus on gender and gender inequality, grounding on women's experiences, utilising reflexivity as a source of insight, participatory methods and a policy or action-oriented component.

analysis of the Fiji military forces, the role and position of women in the military, the changing role of the military, and the construction of militarised masculinities in the 1987 military coups and its aftermath. It examines civil military relations and the parallels between the Fijian social structure and the Fiji military with over 95% ethnic Fijian members. It probes the impact of cultural influences on the construction of violent forms of ethnicised and militarised masculinist norms. The chapter identifies a key finding that the coups became symptomatic of the waning influence of the ruling chiefs and the gradual loss of their long-standing patronage relationship with the military, which has now taken over their place. The second part of this chapter explores the capacity of women to express agency under the militarised and oppressive conditions, particularly in their capacity for political and social resistance against violence and militarism, and to mobilise for political reforms, political leadership and democratisation in the post-coup era.

Chapter 6 The first part of this chapter examines the construction of ‘militarised’ masculinity during Fiji’s third coup and the hostage crisis in May 2000 and its aftermath. Since indigenous rights were exploited for the second time to justify the coup, the chapter probes critical issues surrounding identity politics and inter-racial relations between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians and their respective identity politics. Indigenous Fijian identity politics is examined through the ‘*taukei-vulagi*’ (native-foreigner) ideology, Fijian claim to indigeneity, and internal dynastic/chiefly rivalry. Key identity and relationship concepts such as multiracialism, indigeneity and citizenship rights, ethno-nationalism, etc. are also explored and discussed. The second part of this chapter examines women’s agency in the post-2000 coup and hostage crisis, first, by probing expressions of agency exercised by the women hostages inside the Parliamentary complex, and secondly, when women NGOs and human rights activists joined the NGO movement in the Chandrika Prasad case, to press (successfully) for the restoration of the 1997 constitution in Court. The women’s NGO movement organised peace vigils in response to the hostage crisis, which turned into mobilisation for the return to democratisation, and political agency in the lead up to the 2001 election. Women also mobilised against human rights violations in response to reports of racial attacks against the Indo-Fijian community. Members of the National Council of Women also pressed for gun legislation reforms.

Chapter 7 has three parts. First, it applies a gender intersectionality analysis in the construction of ‘militarised masculinism’ leading up to and following the 2006 military coup. It demonstrates the manifestation of culturally-sanctioned, ‘hyper-militarised

masculinism' by members of the security forces, who feel "entitled" to inflict various forms of gender-based violence against 'perceived' detractors and opponents of the coup. It examines the failure of civil-military relations in the lead up to the 2006 elections, and the first signs of inter-service rivalry between the military and police. The second part probes the application and impact of 'political patronage,' a key component in military rule in which the coup maker, grants political favours to a few senior military officers, in exchange for their loyalty. The shifting patron-clientelist relations as a result of the coups, have seen the diminishing power of the ruling chiefly class being replaced by an emerging military elite class, who has ousted the politicians and replaced the power vacuum left by the departing chiefs. The third part examines expressions of women's agency during and following the 2006 coup through the twin orientations of resistance and reform. Expressions of agency for resistance are seen in women's ability to resist and test the 'psy-ops' method of 'dehumanising' opponents, and by changing a more collaborative, non-confrontational relationship with the military. Reform orientation agency is demonstrated through the capacity of the women's movement and individual co-convenors, to launch the inaugural Women's Forum towards democratisation, and mobilising, educating and empowering women to participate in the 2012 Constitutional review process.

Chapter 8 has four main parts: the first expands women's capacity to express 'agency in post-coup Fiji, by exploring two "action-oriented" research models offered by women that can be useful sources of knowledge and empowerment, and also address some of the negative impacts of the coups and militarisation in Fiji. The first is a 'Peace and Reconciliation' model with the potential to resolve the 'taukei-vulagi' dilemma at the heart of the 'indigenous rights' coups. The second is a proposal for a 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission' (TRC) to address inter-generational trauma suffered by victims of all the coups in Fiji. Women's concerns over the increasing demand for the cadet training scheme in Fiji schools and the militarisation of young people and the schools, has led to the call for the restoration of non-violent, peaceful strategies in place of the militarised cadet scheme in schools. The fourth part is an analysis of the results of the 2014 transitional elections following eight years of oppressive, despotic, military rule. The analysis, from the perspective of gender and militarisation in Fiji, scrutinises the victory of the Fiji First party which this study argues is based on unfair advantage of incumbency through the employment of the 'soldier-turn-civilian (STC) model.

Chapter 9 pulls the threads together with the main research findings and lessons learnt from this study that may be relevant or applicable in similar contexts. The findings are consistent with the call by women for Fiji's (male) leaders to put into practice the principles of good governance.

Chapter Summary

This first chapter provides an overview of the concepts of 'gender' and 'militarisation,' which are key to the thesis topic, "Gender and Militarization in Fiji. It examines manifestations of militarism over the rest of the Pacific compared to Fiji's brand of militarization. It discusses the thesis rationale, key aims and objectives, research questions that guided the research, and situates the thesis in the field of gender and militarization in Fiji and the Pacific. Finally, this chapter identifies four critical contributions of the thesis in the research area of gender and militarization, and concludes with an overview of the nine chapters.

Introduction

This research seeks to investigate the gendered dynamics of militarisation in Fiji from the perspective of women's experiences of the coups and consequent process of militarization. First, it examines the construction and manifestation of 'militarised masculinity' in the four military coups and consequent process of militarisation between 1987 and 2006, by probing the gendered power relations that have influenced the Fiji military forces or military personnel to conduct the coups. Then it investigates the impact of the coups and militarisation on women's socio-economic and political status, and in particular, their ability to express agency in response to the 'militarised, masculinised and ethnicised' conditions of the coups.

Having been strongly influenced by the writings of feminists and 'women of color' in the U.S.A.,⁶⁸ I shall apply a 'feminist intersectionality' framework⁶⁹ to investigate the construction and manifestation of militarised masculinism in the perpetration of the coups, and the impact of these on women and their capacity to express agency in Fiji.

Feminism and feminist theory

While there is no universally agreed definition of feminism, various strands, principles and perspectives generally characterize the knowledge claims of feminist theorists.⁷⁰ A central claim of feminism takes gender as a central category of analysis.⁷¹ As Laura Sjoberg (2009) states, "Feminists see gender subordination as constitutive of the global political world."⁷² At the core of feminism lies a desire to interrogate, evaluate and transform the rights, conditions and status of women.⁷³ Feminism has therefore been associated with a historical political movement geared towards action-coordinated (activism) and social transformation that questions existing conditions and relations of power and seeks to

⁶⁸ For example, Collins, 1990; Davis, 1981; hooks, 2000, 1998, 1989, 1984; 1981; Phillips and McCaskil, 1995; Lorde, 1984;

⁶⁹ For conceptualization of Intersectionality as a paradigm, see Hancock, A-M. 2007. Intersectionality as a Normative and Empirical Paradigm. *Politics and Gender*, Vo. 3 (2): pp 248-254; For a list of Intersectionality theorists, thinkers and scholars see: Crenshaw, 1989; 1991; Yuval-Davis, 2006; McCall, 2005; Davis, 1981; Smith, 1983; hooks, 1984; Moraga and Anzaldúa, 1984; Mohanty, 1988; Spelman, 1988;

⁷⁰ Dietz, Mary. Dietz, Mary. 2003. Current controversies in Feminist Theory. *Annual Review of Political Science*. Vol. 6: 399-431; p. 399

⁷¹ Rhode, Deborah. 1990. Feminist Critical Theories. *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 42 (3): p. 618

⁷² Sjoberg, L. 2009: p. 205 cited in, Kronsell, A. and Svedberg, E. 2010. *Making Gender, making war: violence, military and peacekeeping practices*. New York: Routledge, p. 1

⁷³ Dietz, p.339

interpret and change the world of and for women.⁷⁴ Dietz (2003) affirms feminism as a historically constituted local and global, social and political movement with an emancipatory purpose and normative content.⁷⁵ Similarly, Acker et.al., (1983) define feminists as:

diverse groups of people who take varying positions on particular issues and who identify with a range of political positions [or]...point of view that sees women as exploited, devalued, and often oppressed; [are] committed to changing the condition of women; and [adopt] a critical perspective toward dominant intellectual traditions that have ignored and/or justified women's oppression.⁷⁶

Various strands of feminism have advanced diverse themes and goals pertaining to the political, social and intellectual perspectives on feminism such as equal political and legal rights, equal opportunity, sexual autonomy and a right to self-determination.⁷⁷ The struggle for these rights became translated into a political women's movement in various parts of the world,⁷⁸ aimed at ending sex discrimination, promoting women's rights and interests, transforming institutional and legal structures and engendering democracy.⁷⁹ Acker et.al. contend that such emancipatory feminism provides women with an understanding of how their everyday worlds, trials and troubles are generated by the larger social structure and its close connections to contemporary women's movement, in which the position of women researchers became aligned with the political aims of the women's movement.⁸⁰

In general, the main strands of feminism posit 'women' as the subject and identify the source of problem to be women's oppression through their subjection and objectification in gendered relations, although there are variations in their conception of what constitutes women's oppression in contemporary society, and how to combat such oppression.⁸¹

⁷⁴ Dietz, p. 339

⁷⁵ Dietz, p.399

⁷⁶ Acker, J., Barry, K. and Esseveld, J. 1983. Objectivity and Truth: Problems in doing Feminist Research. *Women's Studies Int. Forum*, Vol. 6 (4) pp. 423

⁷⁷ <http://srmo.sagepub.com.ezproxy.auckland.ac.nz/view/the-social-science-jargon-buster/SAGE.xml>

⁷⁸ Hemmings, C. 2006. The Life and Times of Academic Feminism, in Kathy Davis, Mary Evans and Judith Lorber. *Handbook of Gender and Women's Studies*, Chapter 1, pp 13-34. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE publications Ltd, p. 14.

⁷⁹ Dietz, p. 399

⁸⁰ Acker, Barry and Esseveld, p. 424

⁸¹ Jaggar, A. 2004. Feminist Politics and Epistemology: The Standpoint of Women, in Harding, Sandra (ed). *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*. New York and London: Routledge, p. 55

Feminist strands or perspectives

Four standard feminist perspectives which have been used in academic institutions have included: radical, Marxist, liberal and socialist feminism.

Radical feminism focuses on male violence against women and men's control over women's sexuality and reproduction, seeing men as a group responsible for women's oppression,⁸² which can be addressed through equal opportunity, sexual autonomy and the right to self-determination (or bodily integrity).⁸³ **Marxist feminism** sees women's oppression as tied to forms of capitalist exploitation of labour and class relations,⁸⁴ in which women are oppressed through their exclusion from public production,⁸⁵ thus women's paid and unpaid labour is analysed in relation to its function within the capitalist economy.⁸⁶ **Liberal feminism** is distinctive in its focus on individual rights and choices which are denied women,⁸⁷ and that women's liberation can be achieved through equal political and legal rights and cultural (attitudinal) changes aimed at fostering women's equality with men.⁸⁸ **Socialist feminists** characterize women's oppression through a revised version of Marxist theory of alienation,⁸⁹ with socialist feminism being less economically deterministic and allowing some kind of autonomy to women's oppression, yet retaining the belief that women's liberation and socialism are joint goals.⁹⁰ Despite the attempt to distinguish between the main strands of feminism, many feminists have expressed dissatisfaction with such rigid categorisation due to the risk of excluding so much feminist thinking, and the danger of fixing individual thinkers in a way that ignores the constant changes and developments in the complexities and contradictions in one woman's feminism.⁹¹

Dietz (2003) contends that academic feminism has differentiated and fragmented in light of a wide range of new theoretical approaches and contestations which have moved well beyond the ideological debates of 'liberal,' 'socialist,' or 'radical' that originally framed feminist theory.⁹² Feminist theories are still being debated and refined today, which as

⁸² *ibid*

⁸³ *ibid*, p. 55

⁸⁴ Stacey, p. 51

⁸⁵ Jaggar, p. 55

⁸⁶ Stacey, p. 51

⁸⁷ *ibid*

⁸⁸ Jaggar, p. 55; see also Abramowitz, 1988: 21-22; Williams, 1989: 44-49; Kenway, 1992: 111-114;

⁸⁹ Jaggar, p. 55

⁹⁰ Stacey, p. 52

⁹¹ Stacey, Jackie. 1993. *Untangling Feminist Theory*, in Richardson, D. and Richardson, V. (eds.). *Introducing Women's Studies: Feminist theory and practice*, Ch. 3. London: Macmillan, p. 52

⁹² Dietz, p. 400; see also Jaggar, 1983; Tong, 1989;

Lorber (2015) explains, “as the limitations of one set of ideas were critiqued and addressed by what was felt to be a better explanation about why women and men were so unequal in status and power.”⁹³ Dietz insists that given such diversity, what really exists under the standard rubric of feminist theory is a ‘multifaceted, discursively contentious field of inquiry that does not promise to resolve itself into any programmatic consensus or converge onto any shared conceptual ground’ but itself, ‘is a sign of the dynamism and vitality that marks feminist theory today.’⁹⁴ As Smart aptly puts it, “feminist research [is] its own trenchant critic, which [exists and develops] in a state of constant challenge and continual reformulation.”⁹⁵

In the ensuing debates, Dietz proposes three divergent perspectives which she refers to as ‘difference feminism’, ‘diversity feminism’ and ‘deconstruction feminism’⁹⁶ to frame current discussions regarding the ‘construction’ of the female subject, the nature of sexual differences, the relations between sex and gender, the intersection of gender, race, class, sexuality, etc. and the significance of ‘women’ as a political category in feminism.⁹⁷ Moreover, Lorber proposes ‘gender feminism’ and ‘women’s feminism’ to compare and contrast the utility of the categories ‘gender’ and ‘women’ in feminist debate.⁹⁸

Black Feminism and Third World Feminism

Black feminists have argued that the four strands of feminism discussed above fail to adequately document their simultaneous experience of racism and sexism.⁹⁹ Hence, the basis of radical feminism for a universal sisterhood against patriarchal oppression cannot be valid as it ignores the struggle of black women against the oppressive conditions of slavery, colonialism and racism. Thus, as they struggle for self-preservation, working class black women are most likely to rally behind their working class black men against racism and capitalism. In such a case, gender becomes secondary to race and class issues.¹⁰⁰ Jalal

⁹³ Lorber, Judith. 2015. Strategies of Feminist Research in a Globalized World, in *Analyzing Gender, Intersectionality, and Multiple Inequalities: Global, Transnational and Local Contexts*. Published online 08 March, 2015: 35-49; Downloaded, 21 Sept 2015;

⁹⁴ Dietz, p. 400;

⁹⁵ Smart, Carol. 2009. Shifting horizons: Reflections on qualitative methods. *Feminist Theory*, Vol. 10 (3):295-308; pp. 296-7

⁹⁶ Dietz, p. 339

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 339

⁹⁸ Lorber, 2015; pp. 37-38

⁹⁹ See for example, Collins,

¹⁰⁰ Dill, Bonnie. 1983. Race, Class and Gender: Prospects for an All-Inclusive Sisterhood. *Feminist Studies*, 9 (1): 131-50;

made a similar observation in Fiji when she states that “If you ask most women in Fiji what defines them most they will say in response, it is our race first then our gender.”¹⁰¹

The same argument of exclusion by Black women feminists was also applied to the experience of “Third world women” by scholars like Mohanty.¹⁰² The term “third world women” had been used to refer to any woman who does not live in a westernised, first world country, but in a developing country. Mohanty argues that the image of a “Third world woman” created by western society and used by western feminists typecasts a large group of women who come from very different socio-economic backgrounds, as women who are oppressed and powerless.¹⁰³ Such an assumption is in itself a form of oppression of Third World/Global South women which perpetuates the notion that they are victims. In such a scenario, patriarchy is mirrored in a sense with Western feminists taking on the role of male while the “Third world woman” becomes part of the oppressed.¹⁰⁴

‘Sex’, ‘Gender’ and/or ‘Women’ debate

There is lack of consensus in feminist theory on the meaning or status of the concept ‘women’ or ‘gender’ identity nor is there consensus about how to appropriate gender as a useful category of analysis.¹⁰⁵ Despite divergences within academic feminism however, a general conceptual strategy that informed feminist theorizing since the mid-1970s was the articulation of gender as a phenomenon that is separate from but related to biological claims of natural sexual differences between men and women.¹⁰⁶

Thus the term ‘sex’ is used to refer to the biological make-up of the male and female subject, which locates sexual differences in the male and female anatomy.¹⁰⁷ ‘Gender’ on the other hand, refers to the social construction of the male and female identities through their role, behaviour, attitude, expectations and assumptions which constitutes the ideas, discourses and practices about masculinity and femininity, subjectivities and social

¹⁰¹ Jalal, P. I. 2002. Gender issues in post-coup d’etat Fiji: Snapshots from the Fiji Islands, Keynote address delivered at the Townsville International Conference, James Cook University, Australia; in

¹⁰² Mohanty, C.T. 2003. *Feminism without borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham & London: Duke University Press: see in particular, Chapter 1, “Under Western Eyes:” pp.17-42;

¹⁰³ Nguyen, J. 2017. Feminism is detrimental to Third World Women, Gender Theory, in <https://medium.com/gender-theory/feminism-is-detrimental-to-third-world-women-1c1a7ac2a51a>

¹⁰⁴ *ibid*

¹⁰⁵ See Dietz, p. 400; citing Scott, 1988; Nicholson, 1994; Carver, 1996;

¹⁰⁶ Dietz, p.400

¹⁰⁷ Dietz, p.401

relationships.¹⁰⁸ Expounding on the concepts 'sex' and 'gender,' Lovenduski asserts that sex and gender are analytically distinct, gender is relational, while the concept of sex is meaningless except when understood in the context of gender relations.¹⁰⁹ As various formulations of gender and sex and their relations began to emerge in the 1980s, it moved feminist theory towards what Alcoff calls a "crisis of identity."¹¹⁰

The debate over 'gender' or 'women,' led Lorber to propose two types of feminism, namely 'gender feminism' and 'woman's feminism'. Accordingly, *gender feminism* sees the source of inequality in a gendered social system that privileges some men over most women and some other men, while *woman's feminism* locates the source of oppression in a patriarchal social system that privileges all men and oppresses all women, regardless of their social class, racial or ethnic group or other status. *Woman's feminism* rejects the notion of *gender* because it downplays the distinctive qualities of women, their relationship to their bodies and sexuality, their emotional and nurturing capabilities, their special viewpoint in male-dominated societies and cultures. They also claim that a focus on *gender* erases the category "woman" on which so much of feminist theory, research and politics are based.¹¹¹

Gunnarrson argues that there is nothing essentialist about the category 'women,' and that those who oppose it do so from self-interest as they tend to preclude themselves from the definition and assumptions of the 'woman' category.¹¹² This research agrees with Gunnarrson's question, "whether it is not the point of departure of feminist theorizing that women are oppressed, exploited, discriminated or excluded by virtue of their being women?"¹¹³ Indeed, as Young aptly puts it, "without some sense in which 'woman' is the name of a social collective, there is nothing specific about feminist politics."¹¹⁴ This research supports 'gender feminism' that grounds gender relations on the commonalities and differences between men and women and among women themselves.

¹⁰⁸ Ramazanoglu, C. and J. Holland. 1998; p. 5

¹⁰⁹ As cited in Dietz, p.401

¹¹⁰ cited in Dietz, p. 401

¹¹¹ Lorber, 2011, p. 37

¹¹² Gunnarrson, Lena. 2011. A defence of the category 'women.' *Feminist Theory*. 12 (1) p. 24

¹¹³ *ibid*

¹¹⁴ Young, 1994: 714, as cited in Gunarrson, 2011, p.24

Feminist Intersectionality

This research recognises that women and men in Fiji as elsewhere are not homogeneous groups, and that their experiences and responses to militarism are shaped by other identity categories which apart from gender, include race and ethnicity, age, class and status, religion, location and sexuality, among others. This study shall utilise a feminist intersectionality framework to analyse the construction of gender, as demonstrated through militarised masculinity by men in uniform during the coups, and through women's capacity to express agency in response to the coups and militarisation in Fiji.

In feminist theory, intersectionality has become the predominant way of conceptualizing the relation between systems of oppression which construct gender identities and their social locations in hierarchies of power and privilege.¹¹⁵ Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) had coined the term 'intersectionality' to demonstrate how black and women of color in the United States experienced simultaneous discrimination as a result of the intersection of their gender and race,¹¹⁶ although the concept has been around much earlier.¹¹⁷ As Crenshaw explains, (1991),

the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women's lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Carastathis, Anna. 2014. The Concept of Intersectionality in Feminist Theory. *Philosophy Compass*, 9/5; p.304

¹¹⁶ Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1989. Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Anti-Discrimination Doctrine. *Feminist Theory and Anti-racist politics*. University of Chicago Legal Forum: 139-67: Explaining the origin of her conception of intersectionality, Crenshaw states; "It grew out of trying to conceptualize the way the law responded to issues where both race and gender discrimination were involved. What happened was like an accident, a collision. Intersectionality simply came from the idea that if you're standing in the path of multiple forms of exclusion, you are likely to get hit by both. These women are injured but when the 'race' ambulance and the 'gender' ambulance arrive at the scene, they see these women of color lying in the intersection and they say, "Well, we can't figure out if this was just race or just sex discrimination. And unless they can show us which one it was, we can't help them."

¹¹⁷ Jordan-Zachery, Julia. 2007. Am I a Black Woman or a Woman who is Black? A few thoughts on the meaning of Intersectionality. *Politics & Gender* 3 (2) p. 255; Jordan-Zachery notes that the concept of intersectionality has been around since 1832 when Maria Stewart, like many of her black female contemporaries, articulated a critique of difference that challenged the functioning of race and gender, now referred to as intersectionality.

¹¹⁸ Crenshaw, K. 1991. Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43 (6): p. 1244

The origins and development of the concept of 'intersectionality' have therefore been associated with the political movement of Black women and women of color in the United States,¹¹⁹ when black feminists began to politically critique the liberal feminist strand in the late 1970s and the 1980s.¹²⁰ Black and women of color feminist scholars had criticized the feminist movement for 'homogenizing' women by presuming that all women's experiences of oppression were the same.¹²¹ They pointed out that white liberal feminists were theorizing about women's lives from a privileged point of view and therefore did not take the situation of women in marginalized social positions into consideration.¹²² They claimed that feminism was based on an exclusionary concept of 'women' that actually portrayed the experience of white, middle class women,¹²³ while totally ignoring black women's experiences of racial and gender oppression that had remained invisible in feminist theorizing.¹²⁴ Jordan-Zachery (2007) claims that, as many women of color and other marginalized groups confronted the issue of their omission from so many practices, structures and institutions of society, it gave rise to much theorizing and articulation of useful strategies for addressing these 'unfair' practices through the concept of intersectionality.¹²⁵

While Crenshaw created the concept of intersectionality as an alternative to identity politics, she also distinguished between what she terms 'structural' and 'political' intersectionality.¹²⁶ Structural intersectionality focuses on the direct impact of inequalities and their intersection as experienced by individuals in society, while political intersectionality focuses on the relevance of the impact of inequalities and their intersection to political strategies, or a liberation framework.¹²⁷

Intersectionality thus offered the beginnings of both an analytical framework within which to understand the lives of black women, and a political framework that could be useful for challenging many of the oppressive structures faced by black women.¹²⁸ The debate was

¹¹⁹ Carastathis, p. 305

¹²⁰ Gressgard, R. 2008. Mind the Gap: Intersectionality, Complexity and the Event. *Theory & Science*, p. 1528

¹²¹ *ibid*

¹²² Maj, Julia. 2013. The Significance of Intersectionality for Feminist Political Theory, p.1

¹²³ Gressgard, p. 1528

¹²⁴ *ibid*

¹²⁵ Jordan-Zachery, Julia. 2007. Am I a Black Woman or a Woman who is Black? A few thoughts on the meaning of Intersectionality. *Politics & Gender* 3 (2): p. 254;

¹²⁶ Crenshaw, 1991; Jordan-Zachery, pp. 256-7

¹²⁷ Jordan-Zachery, p.256

¹²⁸ Jordan-Zachery, *ibid*

influenced by a strong emphasis on structural power relations, which Collins (1989) refers to as “a matrix of domination” where race, class, and gender constitute axes of oppression that characterize Black women's experiences within a more generalized matrix of domination. Other groups may encounter different dimensions of the matrix, such as sexual orientation, religion, and age, but the overarching relationship is one of domination and the types of activism it generates.¹²⁹

Intersectionality has been labelled a “travelling concept” by Christensen and Jensen (2012), which takes on new meaning in different contexts.¹³⁰ The concept originated in the United States then travelled to the United Kingdom where it developed within the humanities and social sciences.¹³¹ In Scandinavia, intersectionality first broke through the post-colonial gender researchers in the humanities and social psychology,¹³² and later among gender scholars in political science and sociology who emphasized that intersectional analyses must be able to encompass the interplay between structures and institutions at the macro-level, and identities and lived lives at the micro-level.¹³³

Contribution of Intersectionality to Feminist theory

Many scholars have acknowledged the contribution of intersectionality to feminist theory. McCall (2005) claims that intersectionality is the most important theoretical contribution that women’s studies, and black women’s scholarship in particular, has made to feminist theory.¹³⁴ A fundamental influence of intersectionality is the recognition that gender is not the only defining feature of women’s lives,¹³⁵ a view not easily embraced by feminist theorists who place gender equality at the centre of their political agenda.¹³⁶ Anthias and Yuval-Davis and (1983) argue however that the implication that identity is exclusively determined by gender, is reductionist and not representative of women’s experiences.¹³⁷ Young (1997) suggests that separating gender from other categories is exclusionary

¹²⁹ Collins, Patricia H. 1989. The social construction of Black feminist thought. *Signs*, Vol. 14 (4), pp. 745-773

¹³⁰ Christensen, Ann-Dorte and Jensen, S. 2012. Doing Intersectional Analysis: Methodological Implications for Qualitative Research. *Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, Vol. 20 (2): p. 109

¹³¹ See for example, Phoenix, 2006; Squires, 2007; Yuval-Davis, 2007;

¹³² For example, Lykke, 2003, 2005; Staunaes, 2003, 2004; Gressgard, 2008;

¹³³ Christensen & Siim, 2006; Jensen, 2006;

¹³⁴ McCall, Leslie. 2005. “The Complexity of Intersectionality”. *Signs*, Vol. 30 (3), p.1771;

¹³⁵ *ibid*

¹³⁶ Maj, Julia. 2013. The significance of intersectionality for feminist political theory; p.3

¹³⁷ Anthias, F. and Yuval-Davis, N. 1983. Contextualising Feminism: Gender, Ethnic and Class Divisions. *Feminist Review*, No. 15; pp 62-75; in Maj, 2013: p.2

because it obscures other dimensions of identity.¹³⁸ The separation implies that the category 'gender' is somehow superior to race and class, whereas intersectional research has shown that women's experiences are the result of the intersection between multiple social categories as well as the socio-cultural context in which this interaction takes place.¹³⁹ By decentralizing 'gender' as a category of identity, intersectionality allows for the theoretical consideration of other categories such as race and class, the relationship between these categories and how their intersection or relationships construct people's experiences. This is significant because it challenges the problem of essentialism in feminist political theory.¹⁴⁰

Shields (2008) sees intersectionality as the "mutually constitutive relations among social identities," which are the social categories in which an individual claims membership, as well as the personal meaning associated with those categories.¹⁴¹ Following Lykke, intersectionality is applied in this study both as a theoretical and methodological framework to understand power differentials, and to analyse how political resistance in relation to power differentials are built around the resignification of categorizations and normative identity markers.¹⁴²

When applied to women in Fiji, intersectionality examines how women as individuals and as part of collectives, are able to negotiate the power-laden social relations and conditions to which they identify and to which these relations and identities are embedded, and how they construct meaning out of them.¹⁴³ Intersectionality underlines how different categories are inter-woven, for example, how gender is interwoven with race, status and class, etc. and how the interplays between these categories are seen as mutual and intertwined processes of transformation rather than as a mere 'add-and-stir' of gender, race, ethnicity, and others.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁸ Young, M. 1997. *Intersecting voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy and Policy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; as cited in Maj, 2013; p. 2

¹³⁹ Yuval-Davis, N. 2007. Intersectionality, citizenship and contemporary politics of belonging. *Critical review of international social and political Philosophy*. Vol.10 (3), pp.561-74; cited in Maj, 2013: p. 3

¹⁴⁰ See Fuss, D. 1989. *Essentially speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference*. London: Routledge; cited in Maj, 2013: p.2

¹⁴¹ Shields, S. 2008. Gender: an intersectionality perspective. *Sex Roles*, 59: p. 301; see also Ashmore, et.al. 2004, in Shields, 2008: p. 301

¹⁴² Lykke, N. 2010. *Feminist Studies: A guide to intersectionality Theory, Methodology and Writing*. New York: Routledge;

¹⁴³ Lykke, p. 51

¹⁴⁴ *ibid*

For Jordan-Zachery (2007), the value of intersectionality lies in how it has allowed us “to stop essentializing differences,”¹⁴⁵ between and within groups.¹⁴⁶ Maj (2013) claims that the diverse applicability of intersectionality in accounting for differences between (and among) women, allows for its embrace by the various strands of feminist theory, and providing a platform for cooperation among feminist scholars with differing theoretical stances.¹⁴⁷ Hancock (2007) acknowledges intersectionality as both a theory and research method and conceptualizes it as an inclusive paradigm, which incorporates previously ignored and excluded populations.¹⁴⁸ Carastathis (2014) identifies four main analytic benefits of intersectionality as a research methodology or theoretical framework which include: simultaneity, complexity, irreducibility and inclusivity. She argues that intersectionality insists that multiple, co-constituting analytic categories are operative and equally important in constructing institutionalized practices and lived experiences. Since a real person is not, for example, a woman on Monday, a member of the working class on Tuesday or an indigenous woman on Wednesday, intersectionality responds to the “theoretical demand to read these categories simultaneously.”¹⁴⁹ Carastathis affirms that intersectionality has become the predominant way of conceptualizing the relation between systems of oppression which construct women’s multiple identities and social locations in hierarchies of power and privilege.¹⁵⁰ Over time, researchers¹⁵¹ have used the concept to encompass the “relationship among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations.”¹⁵² As Davis (2008) observes,

Today it is unimaginable that a women’s studies programme would only focus on gender. Textbooks and anthologies in the field cannot afford to neglect difference and diversity among women...Learning the ropes of feminist scholarship means attending to multiple identities and experiences of subordination... At this juncture in gender studies, any scholar who

¹⁴⁵ Jordan-Zachery, p. 257

¹⁴⁶ Crenshaw, 1991

¹⁴⁷ Maj, Julia. 2013. The significance of intersectionality for feminist political theory; p. 2

¹⁴⁸ Hancock, 2007: p.248

¹⁴⁹ Russell, K. 2007. Feminist Dialectics and Marxist Theory. *Radical Philosophy Review*, 10 (1): 33-54; cited in Carastathis, 2014: p.

¹⁵⁰ Carastathis, Anna. 2014. The Concept of Intersectionality in Feminist Theory. *Philosophy Compass*, 9/5: p. 304

¹⁵¹ See for example, Anthias, 2001; Brah, 2002; Maynard, 1994; Yuval-Davis, 1997; as cited in Jordan-Zachery p. 256

¹⁵² McCall, Leslie. 2005. The complexity of Intersectionality. *Signs*, Vol. 30 (3): p.1771

neglects difference runs the risk of having her work viewed as theoretically misguided, politically irrelevant, or simply fantastical.¹⁵³

Intersectionality has therefore highlighted the failure of existing concepts in feminist theory to account for the experience of all women and why categories other than women's gender must be taken into account when formulating feminist theory.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, as Mohanty (1998) argues, intersectionality highlights the need for feminist theorists to be self-reflexive and acknowledge how their specific social positioning influences their work.¹⁵⁵ Intersectionality also underlines the historical and socio-cultural contexts within which women's identities and experiences are constructed. For example, the writing of black feminists and women of color is informed by centuries of struggle, erasure and experience of slavery.¹⁵⁶ This points to another critical contribution of intersectionality which recognizes that experiences of oppression are not the same for all women as a result of the influence of historical and socio-cultural factors, such as slavery, colonialism, militarism and civil war.¹⁵⁷

Limitations and critiques of Intersectionality

Intersectionality has not been without critiques. Carbin and Tornhill have challenged the cross-roads metaphor in the American context that contains the idea of separate entities which meet at one point and then go their separate ways.¹⁵⁸ According to this critique, intersectionality is not suitable for grasping the mutual constituting of social categories.¹⁵⁹ Hornschied (2009) argues that, given the high status of intersectionality, the concept may lead to the exclusion of several forms of feminist knowledge, such as texts that do not use it or early black feminist writing. She also disagrees with its focus on categories which she argues, may move the focus away from categorization as a process.¹⁶⁰ Yuval-David (2006)

¹⁵³ Davis, Kathy. 2008. Intersectionality as buzzword. *Feminist Theory*, Vol.9 (1); p. 68

¹⁵⁴ Smooth, W. 2011. Standing for Women? Which Women? The Substantive Representation of Women's Interests and the Research imperative of Intersectionality. *Politics & Gender*, Vol. 7 (3); pp 436-441; cited in Maj, 2013: p.3

¹⁵⁵ Mohanty, T.C. 1988. Under Western Eye: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. *Feminist Review*, No. 30: pp 61-88;

¹⁵⁶ Thompson, B. 2002. Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism. *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 28 (2): p. 347

¹⁵⁷ Maj, p. 3

¹⁵⁸ Carbin, M and Tornhill, S. 2004; as quoted in Christensen and Jensen, 2012; p. 111

¹⁵⁹ *ibid*

¹⁶⁰ Hornschied, A.2009. Intersectional challenges to gender studies-gender studies as a challenge to intersectionality, as cited in Christensen, 111;

also argues that specific positionings and identities “are constructed and interrelate and affect each other in particular locations and contexts.”¹⁶¹

A number of authors have questioned how to analyse the mutually constitutive processes¹⁶² in terms of the status of social categories. McCall for example, distinguishes between three approaches within feminist theory: anti-categorical approach as represented in post-structuralist theories; the intra-categorical approach which focuses on difference within one category (for example between women, such as Crenshaw’s analysis on black women), the inter-categorical approach, which relates McCall’s own approach to studying complexity and variation in the inter-relations between the different categories of inequality.¹⁶³

A criticism of intersectionality as posed by Jordan-Zachery, is the lack of any associated method to operationalise it.¹⁶⁴ How then can we measure experiences of intersectionality? Yuval-Davis argues that,

the point of intersectional analysis is not to find several identities under one as this would re-inscribe the fragmented, additive model of oppression and essentialize specific social identities.¹⁶⁵

Furthermore, Collins (2001) suggests four criteria that characterize an alternative epistemology utilized by Afro-Americans and these include: the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims, the centrality of personal expressiveness, the ethic of personal accountability, and concrete experiences as criteria of meaning.¹⁶⁶ These four elements have been found useful by Jordan-Zachery in her own study¹⁶⁷ which also serve as a useful guide in this study.

Despite its limitations, this research endorses the values of intersectionality, both as a theoretical and methodological framework that is inclusive, that explores intersecting patterns between different structures of power and how people are simultaneously positioned. It recognizes and accounts for differences and diversity among women and between women and men, and acknowledges that the experiences of oppression are not

¹⁶¹ Yuval Davis, 2006: p.200

¹⁶² Christensen and Jensen, p. 111

¹⁶³ McCall, 2005: pp 1773-4

¹⁶⁴ Jordan-Zachery, pp. 258-9

¹⁶⁵ Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 205

¹⁶⁶ Collins,

¹⁶⁷ Jordan-Zachery,

the same for all women or men as a result of the influences of historical and cultural factors. It is culturally and historically context-specific, and is critical for analysing power dynamics between and within the categories of analysis. These serve as critical tools in analysing the intersectionality of research participants and the knowledge generated by their responses to the research questions as examined in the next chapter on Methodology.

Feminism and Militarism

The feminist debate on 'equality and difference' bears direct relevance to feminist understanding of women's relation to militarization.¹⁶⁸ Cock aptly questions, 'equal to whom and different from what,' and argues that equality has often been defined from male-defined values and institutions which are assumed to be universally valid.¹⁶⁹ In universalizing masculinity as the norm, 'difference' is a mark of deviance or inferiority so that the outcome is that women are either excluded from knowledge, or admitted, but treated the same as men without due regard to difference.¹⁷⁰ As Kronsell (2005) argues, institutions that are largely governed by men have produced and recreated norms and practices that have exclusively included male bodies, and norms of masculinity have dominated their practices.¹⁷¹ Kaplan (1994) iterates the term 'patriarchy' with reference to men's domination over women in society, while the term has been broadened to include societies in which power elites dominate and devalue the powerless.¹⁷²

Feminist response to militarism has been slow in challenging the global pattern of wars, violence and armed conflict.¹⁷³ With reference to the South African context which I argue would also be relevant for Fiji, Cock claims that the role of women in both public and privatized militarization has largely been obscured and mystified by two competing perspectives, sexism and feminism, both of which exclude women on a perception of biological reductionism of women as bearers of "special qualities."¹⁷⁴ While sexism excludes women from the ranks of the military based on their perceived physical inferiority and unsuitability for combat, radical feminism similarly excludes women on opposite

¹⁶⁸ Cock, Jacklyn. 1997. The Feminist Challenge to Militarism. *Agenda*, No. 36: p. 27

¹⁶⁹ Cock, p. 28

¹⁷⁰ Cock, Jacklyn. 1997. The Feminist Challenge to Militarism. *Agenda*, No. 36, p.28;

¹⁷¹ Kronsell, Annica. 2005. Gendered Practices in Institutions of Hegemonic Masculinity. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 7 (2): 281

¹⁷² Kaplan, Laura. 1994. Woman as Caretaker: An Archetype that Supports Patriarchal Militarism. *Hypatia*, Vol. 9 (2);pp.123-124

¹⁷³ Cock, 1997: p.27;

¹⁷⁴ Cock, J. 1989. Keeping the Fires burning: Militarization and the Politics of Gender in South Africa. *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 45/46: Militarism, Warlords and the problems of democracy, p. 50

grounds, based on their nurturing qualities, creativity and pacifism.¹⁷⁵ Perceived as the weaker sex, women must be 'protected' and 'defended' while men are the defenders and protectors in war, militarism and conflict, which then becomes a totally male affair.¹⁷⁶ Thus, man the warrior/soldier dominates the public space as the protector of the 'female' gendered nation and all vulnerable 'others' that need protection including women, children, the elderly, the sick and disabled, while women are confined to the domestic sphere to fulfil their gender roles as mother, nurturer and/or carer.¹⁷⁷

The increasing number of women taking up positions within defence and military institutions across the world, giving rise to the term 'feminization of the military',¹⁷⁸ pose mixed challenges to feminist conceptions on militarism. Liberal feminists who see women's liberation through equality with men by changing sexist laws and institutions, applaud the increasing participation of women in the armed forces as a mark of women's empowerment and emancipation.¹⁷⁹ While extolling the virtues of increasing integration of women into the South African defence force, Molekana stressed the importance for women to achieve access to the last bastion of male power and privilege and to achieve equal opportunities within it.¹⁸⁰

A US report by the Women's Research and Education Institute in 1997 noted that about 68,000 females were on active duty in the US army in 1997, and 43.2 percent of these were black women. Cock contends that the racial characteristics clearly reflect the constraints experienced by black women in American society.¹⁸¹ Enloe remarks that,

This trend may say more about the prospects a young black woman has in the civilian sector for a job that can pay the rent and provide the healthcare for herself and her children than it does about the support of young black women for militaristic values or US foreign policies.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁵ Cockburn, Cynthia. 2010. Gender Relations as Causal in Militarization and War. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 12 (2) 139-157

¹⁷⁶ Cock, 1989; p. 50

¹⁷⁷ Cock, 1997: pp 30-31

¹⁷⁸ From "The King Philosophy" as cited in <http://www.thekingcenter.org/king-philosophy>

¹⁷⁹ Geuskens, I. 2014. Introduction to 'Gender and Militarism: Analyzing the Links to Strategize for Peace. Women Peacemakers Program, May 24, 2014 Action Pack, p. 4

¹⁸⁰ Molekana, E. 1996. The role of women in the South African National Defence Force. *African Security Review*, 24: p. 35, as cited in Cock, p. 29

¹⁸¹ Cock, 1997: p. 31

¹⁸² Enloe, C. 1988. *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women's Lives*. London: Pluto Press; p. 43

The vision of US black civil rights leader, Dr Martin Luther King Jr is still relevant today as fifty years ago, when he saw the triple evils of poverty, racism and militarism as inter-related root causes of violence that was responsible for sending young black Americans into joining the military and war abroad, to escape chronic poverty and racism at home.¹⁸³ Both Enloe's statement and Dr King's philosophy on the links between economic injustice and militarism are relevant in the Fiji context, where the majority of recruits into the British army and the Fiji military and peacekeepers are young ethnic Fijian males.

Cock argues though, that rather than reconciling the concepts of equality and difference, women tend to be adapting uncritically by increasingly buying into a militarized, male identity through their incorporation into military structures across the globe.¹⁸⁴ Relating to her own South African context, Cock sees as problematic the narrow focus on the position of women in the military with little critical analysis of the position of the military in South African society as a whole.¹⁸⁵

A report on some key 'firsts' by military women in the United States applauded the efforts of two women who commanded army companies in the Panama invasion in 1998, and the 270 army women who participated in the invasion of Grenada in 1993.¹⁸⁶ Cock questions the validity of these 'firsts', whether they are 'honorable' achievements that represent progress for women or a shameful record of women's participation and collusion in criminal activities and imperialist invasions.¹⁸⁷ In a similar stance, Muir (1992) describes the Gulf War as a milestone for US women in terms of the advancement of female soldiers by bringing them 'long awaited respect and praise.'¹⁸⁸ Indeed as Geuskens states,

the question is not whether women can handle military tasks, as women possess notable military skills and leadership qualities, but whether the militarization of women's lives is beneficial for women and society in general.¹⁸⁹

This question shall be probed further in the later chapters.

¹⁸³ The King Philosophy as cited in <http://www.thekingcentre.org/king-philosophy>

¹⁸⁴ Cock, 1997: p.28

¹⁸⁵ Cock, p. 29

¹⁸⁶ The Women's Research and Education Institute (1997) as cited in Cock, 1997; p. 29

¹⁸⁷ Cock, p.29

¹⁸⁸ Muir, K. 1992. *Arms and the Woman*. London: Coronet: p. 82; cited in Cock, p. 29

¹⁸⁹ Geuskens, 2014, p. 4

Framing the Fiji Study

It would be useful at this juncture to discuss the relevance of the discourse on gender intersectionality, feminism and militarism in the Fiji situation. Maclellan had reported that in 2006 over 1,000 ethnic Fijians had worked in the Middle Eastern countries of Iraq and Kuwait as soldiers, security guards, drivers and labourers, while more than 2,000 Fijian soldiers including women had joined the British army.¹⁹⁰ This indicates an over-representation of ethnic Fijian men being involved in the militarisation of Fiji and the world, either in the Fiji military or in foreign armies, on deployment in global peacekeeping 'hotspots' around the world, or as privatised-militarised security guards and contracted workers in war zones.

Parallel to a predominant number of young black men and women who join the US army, are the young indigenous Fijians who make up more than ninety percent of the Fiji military, and the majority who apply to join the British army or to serve as security guards in post-war zones. They definitely see military service as a source of livelihood and an option out of poverty. Thus, the links between poverty and militarism drives military recruitment in the Fiji context, and the fact that military personnel are duly rewarded for their 'loyalty' to coup makers through stable employment. As Maclellan states, "military recruitment is a growing source of revenue," which is supported by the Fiji government's announcement that it is aware that more men were leaving for Kuwait and Iraq, "which is a good thing, because it is providing employment for the unemployed. This is one solution to the increasing unemployment rate in the country today."¹⁹¹

The argument by Enloe that the overwhelming response by young people in the US to join the military indicates the need for job security rather than their support for militaristic values,¹⁹² is also relevant for Fiji, despite contextual differences. A Fijian woman I interviewed (talanoa-style) in a village outside Suva, had shared how she actively fundraised for her daughter's air ticket to England to join the British army, by weaving and selling mats and prawning, while the men in her household remained indifferent.¹⁹³ She felt strongly that she was investing in her daughter's future and their own (she and her

¹⁹⁰ Maclellan, Nic. 2006. Fiji, the war in Iraq, and the privatisation of Pacific island security", APSNet Policy Forum, April 06, 2006, <https://nautilus.org/apsnet/0611a-maclellan-html/>

¹⁹¹ Maclellan, Nic. 2006. Fiji, the war in Iraq, and the privatisation of Pacific island security", APSNet Policy Forum, April 06, 2006, <https://nautilus.org/apsnet/0611a-maclellan-html/>

¹⁹² Enloe, C. 1988. Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women's Lives. London: Pluto Press; p. 43

¹⁹³ Fijian woman, late 70s, lives in the village, 20/12/2014;

husband's) future, as their daughter would be able to send them money as soon as she started earning.¹⁹⁴

Women first joined the Fiji military in 1988, with no further recruitment until 2015 when, in response to a UN requirement that ten percent (10%) of peacekeeping troops must be women, an overwhelming number of 1,000 women applied for 100 places in the territorial force (TF).¹⁹⁵ In January 2018, the FMF announced that its naval division would be recruiting women for the first time as part of its effort to promote gender equality,¹⁹⁶ to be consistent with the other services such as the army, police and corrections (formerly, prisons).¹⁹⁷ This generated another huge response with more than 1,200 women between 18 and 25 years applying for the 150 places, to be part of the Fiji navy's first historic female intake.¹⁹⁸ Details about their ranks in the navy were to be determined at the end of their training.

Liberal feminists would support women's recruitment into the military as part of achieving the goals of gender equality and women's empowerment. Examining the role and position of women in the Fiji military however, indicates that the same gender norms that restrict women from taking up combat roles in the military because they need "protection," also confine women to positions of 'care' in the military such as nursing, clerks, physiotherapist, etc., with very limited advances in leadership positions. While this study acknowledges the contextual differences between the Fiji military and the Swedish military in peacekeeping, which may bring into question the validity of applying Kronsell's (2005) analysis, nevertheless it agrees with Kronsell that women in the Fiji military can be a source of vital knowledge and insights about gender relations in the military, instead of simply being co-opted and subsumed under its dominant norms and practices.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁹⁵ Dateline Pacific, Radio NZ. 25 March 2015. 'Around 1,000 women apply to join Fiji Military,' see, <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/programmes/datelinepacific/audio/20172239/around-1000-women-apply-to-join-fiji-military>

¹⁹⁶ Fiji Sun, 9/1/2018. See, <http://fijisun.com.fj/2018/01/09/navy-to-recruit-women/>

¹⁹⁷ Radio New Zealand. 2/2/2018. Fiji Navy says 1200 women apply for historic first intake, in <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/349502/fiji-navy-says-1200-women-apply-for-historic-first-intake>

¹⁹⁸ *ibid*

¹⁹⁹ Kronsell, 2005: pp. 280-281

The question posed by Geuskens²⁰⁰ on whether the militarization of women's lives is beneficial for women and society in general, or whether it will result in the 'increasing 'feminisation' or 'civilianising' of the military, is also relevant in considering the long-term position of women in the Fiji military.

Conclusion

This chapter outlines the feminist theoretical framework upon which this research is grounded. While it takes gender as a central category of feminist analysis, it utilises an intersectional approach to examine how gender is reinforced by its intersection with other social identities such as race and ethnicity, status and class, age, religion, ability, location and sexuality, in their experience of and responses to militarism.

Acknowledging the lack of a universal definition of feminism, the chapter discusses the various strands that have informed feminism in academia, which include radical, Marxist feminism, liberal and socialist feminism, all of which acknowledge the root of the problem as women's oppression, but differ in the means of transforming the oppression. These strands of feminism have been subjected to further criticism for their rigid categorisation which risk excluding other feminist thinking such as 'Black feminism' and 'Third world feminism.' Radical feminism's suggestion for universal sisterhood against patriarchal oppression has been criticised for ignoring and rendering invisible the experience of 'black women' against slavery and racism, and the experience of 'third world' women against colonialism and racism.

This study is grounded upon a feminist intersectionality paradigm, which recognises 'differences' between women and men's experiences of militarism, and among different groups of women. This underscores the need to recognise that women's experiences of oppression or militarism as in the 'Intersectionality' conceptualizes the relation between systems of oppression that construct women's multiple identities and social locations in hierarchies of power and privilege. Apart from gender, these include race and ethnicity, class and status, age, ability, location, religion, and sexuality, among others, which shape or reinforce their experiences and responses. Intersectional research into women's experiences underscores the diversity among women's experiences, as well as the historical and socio-cultural context in which women's experiences and identities are constructed. Intersectionality also allows for self-reflexivity so the feminist researcher

²⁰⁰ Geuskens, 2014: p.4

recognizes how her specific social positioning influences her work,²⁰¹ which shall be explained in the next chapter on Methodology.

This chapter has also discussed various critiques of militarism by various feminist strands such as radical feminism's exclusion of women from militarism and liberal feminism's support for women's increased participation in the military as a demonstration of gender equality, women's empowerment and feminizing the military. Just as the need to question the role of the military in the coups and militarisation in Fiji, this study also questions whether women's participation in the military represents a progress for women and society in general or whether the gender norms continue to confine women to traditional gender roles of 'care and service' in the military. The chapter concludes by situating the discourse on feminism and militarism in the Fiji context.

²⁰¹ Mohanty, T.C. 1988. Under Western Eye: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. *Feminist Review*, No. 30: pp 61-88;

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology, methods and techniques which have guided the conduct of this research. A feminist²⁰² research approach is utilized in the process of gathering information from women whose diverse experiences and expressions of agency in response to militarization, form the subject of this study. This aligns with Campbell and Wasco (2000) who insist that the goal of feminist research should capture “women’s...experiences [and] legitimate women’s voices as sources of knowledge.”²⁰³

The previous chapter had noted the lack of a universally accepted definition of feminism or a single, unified feminist theory.²⁰⁴ Different strands of feminism comprising diverse political, social and intellectual perspectives, all have at the core the desire to question, evaluate and transform the condition and status of women,²⁰⁵ and the best strategies to achieve gender equality. This study is feminist in the sense that it seeks to probe, challenge and transform the militarised conditions that keep women marginalised and oppressed Fiji. First, a definition of relevant concepts is necessary.

Methodology and Method

Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) define ‘methodology’ as the procedures for making and producing knowledge that is valid and authoritative,²⁰⁶ which comprise rules that specify how social investigation should be approached.²⁰⁷ Feminist researchers have raised

²⁰² The term ‘feminist’ used here follows the definition by Acker, Barry and Esseveld (1983) which refers to diverse groups of people who take varying positions on particular issues and who identify with a range of political positions, and a point of view that (1) sees women as exploited, devalued, and often oppressed, (2) is committed to changing the condition of women, and (3) adopts a critical perspective toward dominant intellectual traditions that have ignored and/or justified women’s oppression. Important to take note of what the authors state that some people who identify themselves as feminists do accept the natural science model of sociology (p.423);
²⁰³ Cited in Deutsch, Nancy. 2004. Positionality and the Pen: Reflections on the Process of Becoming a Feminist Researcher and Writer. *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 10 (6), p. 888

²⁰⁴ Downloaded from: <http://srmo.sagepub.com.ezproxy.auckland.ac.nz/view/the-social-science-jargon-buster/SAGE.xml>

²⁰⁵ *ibid*

²⁰⁶ Ramazanoglu C. and J. Holland. 2002. *Feminist Methodology*. London: Sage Publications. Ch.1, Introduction, p.9

²⁰⁷ Ramazanoglu, et.al., pp.10-11

questions about the process of knowledge production in social research,²⁰⁸ including the notions of truth and reality and the connections between ideas, experience and reality,²⁰⁹ which are critical to two key components of methodology, namely ontology and epistemology.

'Methodology' encompass rules and guidelines on how social investigation should proceed hence each methodology links a particular 'ontology' and 'epistemology' that specify how to produce valid knowledge of social reality.²¹⁰ Ontology and epistemology are both branches of philosophy that provide the philosophical foundation of scientific enquiry.²¹¹ Ramazanoglu et.al., note that ontology is a way of specifying the nature of something, such as the belief that gender is social rather than natural.²¹² Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that studies knowledge, its foundation, scope (limitations) and validity.²¹³ An epistemology is a set of procedures for establishing what counts as knowledge and of specifying how researchers know what they know.²¹⁴ Feminist concerns about epistemology centres around questions such as: who knows what, about whom and how is this knowledge legitimate?

In general, methodology entails a social and political process of knowledge production, assumptions about nature and the meaning of ideas, experience, and social reality and how these are connected. This includes a critical reflection on what authority can be claimed for the knowledge that is produced and accountability for the political and ethical implications of knowledge production.²¹⁵

On the other hand, 'method,' which can be confused with 'methodology,' is used loosely to indicate a general approach to research, such as scientific method, empirical method or qualitative method.²¹⁶ More specifically, 'method' refers to the techniques and procedures

²⁰⁸ See for example, Nielson, 1990; Lather, 1991; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Agger, 1998; as cited in²⁰⁸ Taylor, V. 1998. Feminist Methodology in Social Movements Research. *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol 21 (4): p.358

²⁰⁹Ramazanoglu and Holland, pp 9-10;

²¹⁰ibid, pp 11-12

²¹¹ Alemika, E. 2002. Epistemological Foundations of Scientific Method, as cited in Akinyoade, D. 2012. *Ontology and Epistemology for Peace and Conflict Studies*, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, p. 3

²¹² Ramazanoglu and Holland, *ibid*, p. 11

²¹³ Akinyoade, 2012, p.5

²¹⁴ Ramazanoglu and Holland, pp 11-12, p.152

²¹⁵ibid

²¹⁶ Ramazanoglu and Holland, pp 11-12, p.152

used for exploring social reality and producing evidence such as through interviews, observations, focus groups, textual analysis, ethnography and others.²¹⁷

Feminist Research Method versus Scientific method (Positivism)

Feminists have questioned whether there are modes of thinking, data collection and analysis that are more appropriate than others for studying the situation of women from a feminist perspective.²¹⁸ Since the 1970s, feminist scholars have critiqued, raised concerns, and challenged approaches to generating knowledge within traditional social sciences.²¹⁹ They targeted in particular the application of a scientific method loosely known as 'positivism' which claims that reality is directly accessible given the correct methods and that rigorous rules of knowledge production can prevent connections between knowledge and reality being contaminated by the researcher's values.²²⁰

While feminists have been criticized for failing to produce adequate rational, scientific or unbiased knowledge, they have in turn challenged positivist claims to privileging knowledge production and analysis in terms of rationality, validity, rules of method, objectivity and control over political bias and subjectivity.²²¹ As Harding (1987:182) elaborates,

Scientific knowledge-seeking is supposed to be value-neutral, objective, dispassionate, disinterested, and so forth. It is supposed to be protected from political interests, goals and desires (such as feminist ones) by the norms of science. In particular, science's 'method' is supposed to protect the results of research from the social values of the researchers.²²²

Feminists challenge the ideology of positivism by claiming that it is not consistent with how scientists behave since science is a social activity and a cultural product, created by persons who live in the world of science as well as in the societies that breed them.²²³ Feminists

²¹⁷Ramazanoglu and Holland, p.11

²¹⁸ Acker, J., Barry, K., and Esseveld, J. 1983. Objectivity and Truth: Problems in doing Feminist Research. *Women's Studies Int. Forum*, Vol. 16 (4): 423

²¹⁹ See for example, Bart, 1971; Bernard, 1973; McCormack, 1975; Smith, 1974; as cited in Acker, et.al., 1983,

p. 423; see also DeShong, Halimah. 2013. Feminist Reflexive Interviewing: Researching Violence Against Women in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies*, Issue 7:1;

²²⁰ Ramazanoglu, C. and J. Holland. 2002. *Feminist Methodology*, Ch. 3: Can feminists tell the truth? Challenges of scientific method. London; Sage Publications Ltd, p. 45

²²¹ Ramazanoglu, C. and J. Holland. 2002. *Feminist Methodology*, Ch. 3: Can feminists tell the truth? Challenges of scientific method. London; Sage Publications Ltd, p. 2

²²² Ramazanoglu, et.al., p. 46

²²³ Bleier:1948: p. 193, cited in Ramazanoglu, et.al. p. 46

argue that the scientific view of 'value-free research' could not be met in practice,²²⁴ which led Mies (1983) to term her experience as a woman scholar attempting to conduct 'value-free' research, as a type of "schizophrenia."²²⁵

Since the women's movement had mobilized out of women's fundamental everyday experiences of gender oppression, feminists have challenged society to look at the world through women's eyes.²²⁶ Feminists in the academy from all mainstream disciplines also point out that the topics and frameworks of the social sciences have all too often been male-centred hence the need to re-examine and re-conceptualize these in light of women's experiences.²²⁷ The central concern has been whether and how traditional approaches to knowledge have enabled or obstructed the development of more democratic and egalitarian social relations.²²⁸

Feminist researchers contend that conventional standards for 'good' research are consistent with the aims of those in positions of management and control in society,²²⁹ so that what is taken as problematic in much of social science, actually reflects what is problematic for those in control of society. Since most of those who rule, manage and control are male, social phenomena is identified from a male perspective, leaving invisible the female domain of production and reproduction that provides the necessary infrastructure for the male world.²³⁰ From this perspective, women's situation has been deemed uninteresting and largely unconceptualized, contributing to prevailing dominance of society from a male perspective.²³¹ As feminist scholars began to interrogate the conditions that have contributed to women's oppression in society, they also questioned the intellectual tools inherited from a male dominated intellectual tradition and the 'taken-for-granted' world view of traditional science such as that of the researcher remaining a neutral observer outside the social realities being studied.²³² Referring to her own field of sociology, Smith (1990) argues that while claiming to do impartial research, social science

²²⁴Harding and Norberg. 2005, p. 2010

²²⁵ Cited in Deutsch, Nancy. 2004. Positionality and the Pen: Reflections on becoming a feminist Researcher and Writer. *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 10 (6), p. 885

²²⁶ Ferree and Hess, 1994 in Taylor, p.365;

²²⁷ Stacey and Thorne, 1985; as cited in Taylor, p.365;

²²⁸ Harding, S. and K. Norberg. 2005. *New Feminist Approaches to Social Science Methodologies: An Introduction*. *SIGNS: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 30 (4): p.2009

²²⁹ Smith, D. 1990. *The Conceptual Practices of power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge*. Boston: Northeastern University Press; as cited in Acker, et.al., 1983,p.424; Harding et.al., 2005,p.2009

²³⁰ Acker, et.al., 1973: p. 424

²³¹Acker, et.al., 1973: p. 424

²³² *ibid*

was constructing the 'conceptual practices of power.'²³³ Taylor reiterates what DuBois (1983) had stated that:

Feminist scholarship begins in the recognition that the positivist model of science is merely one model of reality, that science is shaped by human beings and filtered through human consciousness, and that traditional positivist science reflects and reinforces dominant culture and values.²³⁴

Since the 1980s, feminist scholarship on methodology and epistemology have made significant contribution to the de-privileging of rationality and objectivity as the cornerstone to the study of social phenomenon, by challenging the idea of the detached, unbiased researcher.²³⁵ This study shall put into practice some of the feminist challenges against positivism.

Feminist Research Approach: Feminist Principles and Practice

In this section I discuss the principles of feminist research that have influenced my approach to the current study, including the key methods (techniques and strategies) chosen for gathering evidence (information and knowledge).

While most feminist scholars agree on the lack of a feminist methodology, they insist on generally accepted principles that are characteristic of feminist research practice. These include a transformative goal that contributes to women's liberation by producing knowledge that can be used by women themselves, which is emancipatory and/or empowering. The methods of gaining knowledge are participatory and egalitarian rather than oppressive, and continually develops a feminist critical perspective that questions both the dominant intellectual traditions and reflects on its own development (reflexivity).

²³⁶

This study shall follow the five key principles of feminist methodology suggested by Taylor, which are inclusive of the general principles discussed above. While these principles do not represent a rigid model of the way feminist research should be done, they can be viewed rather as a summary of existing practices.²³⁷ These five elements include: a focus on gender

²³³ Harding et.al., p. 2009

²³⁴ Taylor, p. 358

²³⁵ DeShong, 2013, p.1

²³⁶ Acker, J., Barry, K. and Esseveld, J. 1x83. Objectivity and Truth: problems in doing feminist research. *Women's Studies Int. Forum*, Vol. 6 [4]: 425

²³⁷ Taylor, .362

and gender inequality, grounding on women's everyday experiences, utilising reflexivity as a source of insight, participatory methods and a policy or action-oriented component.²³⁸

Reference to the 'action-oriented' component of this research is discussed at length in Chapter 8 under Women's Agency, as part of the transformative goal of this thesis that contributes knowledge which women can use for their own empowerment and liberation. Two models are proposed including a "Peace and Reconciliation" model that was used in the province of Rewa and has the potential to resolve the dilemma of the 'Taukei-vulagi' identity politics at the heart of the 'indigenous rights-based' coups (see Chapter 5 and 6). The second is a proposal for a 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission' (TRC) which many women have discussed the subject of women's NGO discussion and which many interviewees recommend could heal the inter-generational trauma and grievances suffered by victims of all the coups, and for the healing of the nation as a whole. These are examples of actions that women can offer to benefit academic research, as Phillips alludes to in the next paragraph. The influential writings of women of color in the United States of America (USA),²³⁹ illustrate their brave attempts to make visible the everyday struggles of black women against the triple oppression of race, class and gender.²⁴⁰ For example, Phillips a 'black' woman who teaches at a US college has criticized the misconception that academe has nothing to gain from the everyday experiences of [black] women by dismissing these as being not worthy of scholarly investigation.²⁴¹ She argues that disregarding women "as capable generators, interpreters, or validators of knowledge, even when that knowledge pertains to their own experiences," has not only hurt women but more so the academy.²⁴²

Despite contextual differences between Fiji and the United States, the parallels in the experience of indigenous women in Fiji and women of color in America have influenced the

²³⁸ Taylor, V. 1998. Feminist Methodology in Social Movements Research. *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol 21, No. 4: p.360; see also Fonow and Cook, 1991; Cancian, 1992; Reinhartz, 1992; as cited in Taylor, p. 360; Acker, Barry and Esseveld (1983), p. 342

²³⁹ See for example, Phillips L. and B. McCaskill, 1995:1007-1018; bell hooks.1998, 2000. *Feminist theory: from margin to centre*. Mexico: South End Press; Collins, Patricia Hill.1990; *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge; Dill, Bonnie T and Zinn, M. 1996. Theorising Difference from Multi-racial Feminism. *Feminist Studies*, Vol 22 (2) 321-330; Russell, Michele.1982. "Black-Eyed Blues Connections: Teaching Black Women." In Gloria T.Hull, Patricia B. Scott and Barbara Smith (ed). *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, but Some of Us are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, New York: Feminist Press:196-207;

²⁴⁰ Layli Phillips and B. McCaskill. 1995. Who's Schooling Who? Black women and the Bringing of Everyday into Academe. *SIGNS*, Vol. 20: No 4, p 1009;

²⁴¹ Ibid, p. 1009

²⁴² Phillips and McCaskill, p. 1009;

focus of this research on women's experiences and their responses to militarization as a subject of serious academic investigation. I agree with Phillips and McCaskill that 'black' women's scholarship has opened the door for other marginalized or excluded groups (such as indigenous women), for institutional validation of their experiences and concerns.²⁴³ As Crenshaw iterates, 'when they enter, we all enter.'²⁴⁴

In the next section, I examine the current study under the first two feminist research principles discussed above, focusing on 'gender' and 'women's experiences.' The other two feminist principles of reflexivity and participatory methods, are applied in the practical field study, while the 'action-oriented component' of this research is considered at length in the beginning of Chapter 8 on Women's Agency.

Gender inequality and Intersectionality

Applying a gender perspective means probing and questioning the power relations between men and women, between and among women, between and among men.²⁴⁵ As power relation is central to feminist research, this study investigates the construction of gender in the militarization of Fiji as manifested through militarist and masculinist gender norms.²⁴⁶ A more inclusive intersectional framework shines the spotlight on women whose experiences and knowledge are shaped not only by their gender but also other social identities such as race and ethnicity, class and status, religion, age, ability, sexuality, among others. As Gunnarson (2011) affirms, "women are not only women, but also black, white, rich, poor, heterosexual, etc."²⁴⁷

Women who participated in this study are not only indigenous, but have diverse perspectives and experiences of militarisation based on their status, class, religion, age, location, sexuality, ability, etc. Intersectionality acknowledges that the experience of oppression is not the same for all women due to their multiple positioning across the spectrum of social identities and relations, which minimises the risk of invalidating some women's experiences, that can happen when power relations among and between women are ignored or taken for granted.²⁴⁸ Hence intersectionality has also been operationalised

²⁴³ Philips and McCaskill, p. 1017;

²⁴⁴ These words by Kimberle Crenshaw, (1989: 167) invoking Paula Giddings as cited in MacKinnon, C. 2013. Intersectionality as Method: A Note. *Signs*, Vol. 38 (4), p. 1026

²⁴⁵ Farr, 2006:109

²⁴⁶ Ramazanoglu and Holland,1998:9; see also McKee and O'Brien, 1983; Sharpe, 1994

²⁴⁷ Gunnarsson, L. 2011. A defence of the category 'women.' *Feminist Theory*. Vol.12 (1) p.25

²⁴⁸ Gunnarsson, L. 2011. A defence of the category 'women.' *Feminist Theory*. Vol.12 (1) p.25

in this study by identifying the intersectional markers of individual interviewees where they are quoted in the research, and by probing the intersection between interviewees' experiences of militarisation and their multiple location across the spectrum of social identities and relations, such as gender, race and ethnicity, class and status, religion, age, sexuality, religion, location, etc.

Spotlight on women's experiences

Highlighting women's responses to militarisation fulfils the second objective of gender analysis in this research which deepens our understanding and appreciation of women as generators of knowledge with a capacity for agency under the oppressive, militarised and masculinised conditions of the coups.²⁴⁹ By investigating the intersection of militarism and women's social positioning, this research is consistent with the goal of feminist research that aims to make women's experiences visible and important, in order to correct absences in previous accounts that fail to recognise the centrality of gender and its reinforcing identities, to the coups and militarisation in Fiji.²⁵⁰ This ties in also with Gottfried's (1995) claim, that the representation of women's experiences is the beginning and often the end of knowledge claims.²⁵¹

By highlighting women's experiences this study contributes to:

making visible the invisible, bringing the margin to the centre, rendering the trivial important, putting the spotlight on women as competent actors, [and] understanding women as subjects in their own right.²⁵²

²⁴⁹ Ramazanoglu et.al., p.60

²⁵⁰ For reference on the 1987 coup, see Ritova and Dean 1988; Chand and Naidu 1997; Lal 1988, 1998; Robertson and Tamanisau 1988; Robertson 1998; for accounts of the 2000 coup, see for example, Robertson and Sutherland 2001; Lal and Pretes 2001; Robertson, 2000; Field, Baba and Nabobo 2005; On the 2006 coup, see, J. Fraenkel, S. Firth, B. Lal (eds.) (2009) *The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: a coup to end all coups?* Canberra: ANU E Press; Jon Fraenkel (2009). *The Fiji coup and the politics of ethnicity*, in **Inside Story**, Current affairs and culture; *see also* Ratuva, 2011.

²⁵¹ Gottfried, H.1996. Engaging women's communities: Dilemmas and contradictions in feminist research. In Gottfried, H. (ed). *Feminism and social change*, (pp 1-20), Urbana: University of Illinois Press, p.5 as cited in Taylor, 1998:358

²⁵² Reinharz, Shulamit.1992. *Feminist Methods in Social Research*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 241

Phillips acknowledges her own liberation as a Black woman academic after reading Michele Russell's (1982) book²⁵³ on the education of everyday Black women, which convinced her about the "absolute necessity of speaking from and about one's experiential location and not to or about someone else's." ²⁵⁴ For Phillips, the book affirms the validation of Black women's everyday experiences by Black women themselves in academic settings, ²⁵⁵ in which Black women's scholarship "has placed Black women and their experiences at the center of analysis," [where] "they own the centering."²⁵⁶ The current research aims to document indigenous women's experience of militarization in Fiji, so they too can own the centering of their knowledge, instead of it being used by for the personal advancement of other researchers.

It has been argued that dominant groups are ill-equipped to identify oppressive features of their own beliefs and practices since their daily experiences do not equip them with the intellectual and political resources to detect such values and interests.²⁵⁷ Those who have experienced oppressive conditions are better able to produce validated knowledge of their experiences since they are speaking from their experience.

Hence the advice from Phillips to "go to the source,"²⁵⁸ is timely. Speaking about the experience of Black women in America she writes:

...we are the source, the everyday [Black] women as much as we are gatherers and interpreters of the data, the capable generators...the rappers who engage each other's rhythms and rhymes...in other words, we do not have a problem with our own subjectivity.²⁵⁹

The current research aims to highlight the marginalized voice of indigenous women in Fiji by putting their experiences of militarism at the centre of this study, in harmony with the

²⁵³ Russell, Michele.1982. "Black-Eyed Blues Connections: Teaching Black Women." In Gloria T.Hull, Patricia B. Scott and Barbara Smith (ed). *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, but Some of Us are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, New York: Feminist Press:196-207, cited in Phillips and McCaskill, 1995:1009

²⁵⁴ Phillips and McCaskill, 1995: 1009-1010

²⁵⁵ibid, p.1009; see also Russell, Michele.1982. "Black-Eyed Blues Connections: Teaching Black Women." In Gloria T.Hull, Patricia B. Scott and Barbara Smith (ed). *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, but Some of Us are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, New York: Feminist Press:196-207;as cited in Phillips and McCaskill, 1995

²⁵⁶ Ibid, p.1010

²⁵⁷ Harding, S. and Norberg, K. 2005. *New Feminist Approaches to Social Science Methodologies*. *Signs, Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 30 (4), p. 2010

²⁵⁸ Phillips and McCaskill, p.1016

²⁵⁹ Ibid

feminist goals of challenging gender inequality and empowering women.²⁶⁰ By applying an intersectional approach to investigating the experience of women in relation to militarism in Fiji, this study reaffirms the words of Collins that “only those individuals who have lived through the experiences about which they claim to be experts are more believable and credible than those who have merely read or thought about such experiences.”²⁶¹

I shall also discuss how two other principles of feminist research, namely reflexivity and the use of participatory methods are operationalized in the evidence-gathering process, and influenced the choice of methods utilised during the field research in Fiji, and throughout the collection and analysis of information of women’s knowledge. The fifth principle of social action and transformative research, shall be discussed under the ‘action-oriented’ research models that are mentioned later in this chapter, but discussed at length in Chapter 8 under women’s agency.

Field Work and Feminist Research Methods

This section expands on the practical components and methods undertaken during the field study in Fiji, including ethical considerations, recruitment of participants, qualitative approach, the methods of data collection including in-depth and unstructured interviewing, indigenous methods of ‘*talanoa*’ (story-telling) and ‘*tara-koro*’ (community building), content and textual analysis. I shall weave in the practical considerations and influences of reflexivity and positionality throughout the conduct of the field study.

But first, I turn to Nagar (2002) who has captured very well my own sense of commitment to undertaking this research with the women in Fiji:

When feminist scholars from Western countries come here to do their research, they often try hard to do everything in our local language and idiom. But why is it that when they return to their institutions, they frequently write in ways that are totally inaccessible and irrelevant to us? ... The question of access is not just about writing in English. It is about how one chooses to frame things, how one tells a story ... [Suppose] you tell my story in a way that makes no sense at the conceptual level to me

²⁶⁰ Taylor, 1998:358

²⁶¹ Patricia Hill Collins. 1992. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge, p. 209, as quoted in Phillips and McCaskill, p. 1016

or my community, why would we care what you have to say about my life?²⁶²

The above quotation reflects my own obligation to undertake research that can contribute to the empowerment and transformation of women's lives in Fiji.²⁶³ For to write up a whole thesis in academic language and in a format that is inaccessible to those being studied or makes no difference in their lives, renders the study useless. As Taylor points out, knowledge generation is the starting point of most academic research but feminist research often begins out of a commitment to social activism,²⁶⁴ hence the 'action' in 'action-oriented research methods' is envisioned as women using the research in policy and advocacy.

When I first began as an indigenous activist in Fiji, we often lamented how generously we gave our time and ideas to academics or consultants from outside who are likely to use the knowledge gained (from the trials and tribulations of our own experiences), for their own benefit and leaving us indigenous "experts" bereft of our ideas and potential project funding. It also serves as a reminder of Philipps' reference to Black women's familiarity with the experience of having one's experience "appropriated, exploited, misconstrued, and ultimately dismissed."²⁶⁵ Furthermore, as Ackerly and Attanasi (2009) noted, global feminist ethical perspective requires us to worry about the 'politics of researchers' studying local activism and using it for transnational audience, and the 'politics of resource distribution' if transnational activism draws people, resources and attention away from local politics and into international organizations.²⁶⁶

This study serves as a reminder for my own accountability towards the goal of empowering women in Fiji, by placing their experience of militarisation at the centre of analysis, where previously they have remained marginalized and silenced following four military coups and three decades of military-led and backed governments. This study places indigenous women at the centre of knowledge generation and validation where they own the

²⁶² A group discussion with three feminist scholar-activists in Pune, India in July 27, 2000; cited in Nagar, R. 2002. *Footloose Researchers, 'Travelling' Theories, and the Politics of Transnational Feminist Praxis*. Gender, Place and Culture, Vol. 9 (2):p.179;

²⁶³ Harrison, Deborah. 2001. *Can Research, Activism, and Feminism Converge? Some Notes on Collaborative Action-Oriented Inquiry*. An International Feminist Challenge to Theory, Vol. 5: p.233

²⁶⁴ Taylor, 1998, p. 372

²⁶⁵ Phillips, L. and B. McCaskill, 1995, p. 1011

²⁶⁶ Ackerly, B. and K. Attanasi. 2009. *Global Feminism: Theory and Ethics for Studying Gendered Justice*, p.545

‘centering’ of their knowledge, instead of the male-dominated academic institutions that traditionally own the site of knowledge validation.²⁶⁷

UNDERTAKING THE RESEARCH

Ethical considerations

It is acknowledged that the conduct of feminist research is a common practice that is fraught with ethical dilemmas, but that the underlying issue is about ‘respect for persons,’ as subjects or participants in the research.²⁶⁸

The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee granted research approval with human subjects (Ref. No. 8198) for a period of three years from July 2012 to July 25, 2015. The Committee had initially expressed concerns about the political conditions in Fiji following the military coup of December 2006. Assurances were provided by my Supervisors especially Professor Ratuva, that undertaking research in Fiji did not warrant a permit as was required for organized public meetings.

The Research site: Suva, Fiji

At the time of the field study, Fiji’s political conditions were undergoing positive changes. The public order decree was amended, which previously restricted public gatherings and curtailed media freedom, and allowed for two new developments that were relevant to the conduct of this research. A new constitutional review consultation was happening throughout Fiji and the formation of a Fiji Women’s Forum by key women’s organizations heralded a new opportunity for women’s agency and mobilisation.²⁶⁹ Women’s organizations had been funded through the Women’s Forum to conduct civic education parallel to the constitution review submissions.²⁷⁰ As Fiji prepared for its first elections in 2014 following eight years of repressive military rule, these two developments made the military regime look good from outside yet a climate of fear prevailed which was fuelled by gossip and rumour-mongering. This was exacerbated by the increasing cases of police and

²⁶⁷ Phillips and McCaskill, p. 1008,1010; Taylor, p.360

²⁶⁸ McCormick, Melinda. 2012. Feminist Research Ethics, Informed Consent, and Potential Harms. *The Hilltop Review*, Vol 6 (1), p.23;

²⁶⁹The four co-Convenors included the Fiji Women’s Rights Movement (FWRM), Fem-Link Pacific, Fiji National Council of Women (FNCW) and the Soqosoqo Vakamarama (SSVM) the Indigenous Fijian Women’s Association.

²⁷⁰ Funding was provided by UNDP

military brutality, torture and abuse and atrocious human rights violations at the hands of the military and the security forces.²⁷¹

Conducting a research on militarisation with women participants under such oppressive conditions posed great challenges. Initial attempts to get informal views from some women on their perception of the role of the military often met with responses such as, “just read our [constitutional] submission,” as if their views were validated by the constitutional review process because it was legitimately constituted, compared to freely expressing their opinions in response to the interview questions. The constitutional review submissions formed a key part of the texts for content analysis in this study.

Recruitment of participants

At the time of the field research in Suva, the Women’s Forum had mobilized different women’s groups and networks towards a shared goal of increasing women’s participation in leadership, ahead of the scheduled Fiji national elections in September 2014.²⁷² Since I would be in Fiji from November 30 to December 15, I was invited to join the third consultation on 3-4 December 2012, to meet and establish contact with prospective research participants.

Potential interviewees were recommended by my contact in Fiji, based on their participation in civic education and attendance at previous consultations by the Women’s Forum which had considered the role of the military in the outcome document. My role was to establish contact and explain to them the purpose of the research. In the two weeks I spent in Fiji, I was able to identify and conduct in-depth, semi-structured interview with 16 indigenous Fijian women who were willing to share their views. Once they learnt I was conducting a research on the coups and militarisation, many more willingly shared their views on particular topics covered in the research during social functions and church gatherings. I soon filled up journals, diaries and pages of written notes based on these informal ‘*talanoa*’ (story telling) or ‘*tara koro*’ (community building) conversations or sessions, with records from as early as December 2006 soon after the coup, up to August 2010 when I first migrated to New Zealand. The informal *talanoa* (story-telling) provided the bulk of my source of information as conversation was spontaneous and not subject to

²⁷¹ US Department of State. 2012. Fiji 2012 Human Rights Report, pp 1-31 <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/204413.pdf>; also Report by ABC ‘Amnesty accuses Fiji military of torture’ in www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2102/s3653263.htm

²⁷² The Fiji Women’s Forum was set up on 2012 by four women’s organizations referred to as co-Convenors which included); source: www.fwrm.org.fj/programmes/fiji-womens-forum

a rigorous question-answer model. As Ali (2014) notes, “[S]tories are the creative conversion of life itself into a more powerful, clearer, more meaningful experience. They are the currency of human contact.”²⁷³

Due to adversarial conditions at the time, I ruled out participants from other ethnic groups or those with close ties to the military, as I was conscious of my ethical responsibility as a researcher to “Do No Harm.”²⁷⁴ It would not be fair to expect these women to speak freely and putting them in harm’s way.

Justification for limiting participants to indigenous Fijian women

Notwithstanding the commitment to intersectionality in this study, and the potential benefits of drawing on the experience of women from other races, the choice to restrict interview participants to indigenous Fijian women was important for two reasons. First, in terms of military participation, indigenous Fijian men make up ninety five percent (95%) of military personnel as soldiers, peacekeepers, foreign army recruits or private security guards. While the impact of the coups and militarization were borne equally by citizens of Fiji across all ethnicities and genders, the decision to focus on indigenous women is made from the perspective of the overwhelming participation by Fijian men in the military or as perpetrators of the coups, and the impact that such participation have had on indigenous women. Furthermore, while most coup analyses have been written from the perspective of men,²⁷⁵ predominantly Indo-Fijian men, these have focused more on the upper classes such as the ruling chiefs, politicians, or the ‘militarised-masculinised’ coup makers. While the military has extended its muscles nation-wide through the coups, it must be noted that much of the violence that came out of such muscle flexing had started in the home, yet indigenous women’s perspectives and experiences of violence in the home have continued to remain invisible. This study intends to shatter this invisibility and silence. Additionally, very little study has been made on the impact of the coups and militarization on indigenous Fijian women *per se* when compared with the number of Indo-Fijian writers and analyses

²⁷³ Robert McKee in Ali, M.Ibrahim. 2014. Stories/story-telling for women’s empowerment/empowering stories. *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 45: pp.98-104

²⁷⁴ Tolich, M. and C. Davidson. 1999. *Starting Fieldwork: an introduction to Qualitative Research in New Zealand*. Auckland: Oxford University Press, p. 71

²⁷⁵ For accounts on the 1987 coups, see Ritova and Dean, 1988; Chand and Naidu, 1997; Lal, 1988, 1998; Robertson and Tamanisau, 1988; Accounts on the 2000 coup, see Robertson and Sutherland, 2001; Lal and Pretes, 2001; Robertson, 2000; Field, Baba and Nabobo, 2005; For account of the 2006 coup, see Fraenkel, J., Firth, S. and Lal, B. (eds). 2009. *The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: A coup to end all coups?* Canberra: ANU E-Press;

on the impact of the coups on the Indo-Fijian community or Indo-Fijian women.²⁷⁶ This study shall therefore address the blatant absence, silence and invisibility by focusing this academic analysis on the experiences and perspectives of indigenous women. There is an added risk of taking for granted the views of indigenous women based on the presumption that because of their race, they would naturally support the actions of their men in the military. It is important to hear their voices and perspectives on the coups and militarization. Focusing on the intersectionality of indigenous women's social positioning in the wide spectrum of power relations, as their gender intersects with race and ethnicity, status and class, age, religion, ability, sexuality and location, etc.²⁷⁷ we can learn much about the diversity of indigenous women's experience of militarization, with its own complexities and power dynamics.²⁷⁸

As a novice researcher utilizing an intersectional lens, I felt more comfortable commencing my research among a group with whom I shared a common identity such as 'race' thus confirming Deutsch's (2004) suggestion that when social positionality is shared with participants, there is a willingness to discuss and articulate issues.²⁷⁹ It also resolved two ethical issues: it was easier to establish trust and rapport since apart from gender, we shared the common social location of race, which also gave way to a more equal power relationship between myself as the researcher and the participants, because one key element of social difference (race and hence language) is reduced.²⁸⁰

Informed consent and Participant Confidentiality

In order to obtain the 'informed' consent of participants, the consent letter was translated from academic jargon into the Fijian language for those who preferred to be interviewed in the indigenous Fijian language, otherwise it could create a power wedge between myself and the participants.²⁸¹ The purpose of the research and the questions I was probing was explained in Fijian so I could make the connections to their everyday experiences of

²⁷⁶ See for example, Trnka, Susanna. 2008. *State of suffering: political violence and community survival in Fiji*. Ithaca: Cornell University; Lateef, 2009;

²⁷⁷ Gunnarsson, 2011, p. 24

²⁷⁸ Carstemsem-Egwuom, I. 2014. *Connecting Intersectionality and Reflexivity: Methodological approaches to social positionalities*. ERDKUNDE, Vol. 68 (4):265;

²⁷⁹ Deutsch, Nancy. 2004. *Positionality and the Pen: Reflections on the Process of Becoming a Feminist Researcher and Writer*. *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 10 (6): 2002 ;

²⁸⁰ Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach (2008) as cited in Shields. S.A. 2008. *Gender: an Intersectionality Perspective*. *Sex Roles*, 59: 301-311, p. 302: had noted that, "the more marginalized the status the individual identified with, or the identity she occupied, the greater the oppression."

²⁸¹ McCormick, Melinda. 2012. *Feminist Research Ethics, Informed Consent, and Potential Harms*. *The Hilltop Review*, Vo. 6 (1): 23-32; p. 23

militarization. All except one preferred ‘verbal’ consent rather than signing the consent form, and the one who signed did not have an issue with confidentiality or identity as she felt she had nothing to lose.

The Research Approach: Qualitative research

The debate on quantitative and qualitative research methods are relevant to feminist research.²⁸² Feminist researchers have challenged quantitative positivistic rules of objectivity,²⁸³ and argue that even “hard” quantitative methods can never be purely objective, since humans are not computers who process information without some degree of subjective interpretation.²⁸⁴ They assert that quantitative data is often manipulated by the researcher, therefore incorporates subjective acts within a supposedly purely objective analysis.²⁸⁵ Deutsch notes that quantification research methods tend to ‘categorize and amalgamate humans into lumps of data,’²⁸⁶ or as “numbers in boxes.”²⁸⁷

Feminists do not reject totally the use of quantitative methods,²⁸⁸ as Taylor argues that treating women as subjects in their own right rather than as objects of research has opened the door for quantitative researchers to use feminist techniques.²⁸⁹

This study therefore utilised a qualitative, semi-structured and unstructured interview technique, mixed with indigenous methods of ‘*talanoa*’ (story-telling) and ‘*tarakoro*’ (community building), to investigate women’s experiences of militarization in Fiji.

²⁸² Westmarland, N. 2001. The Quantitative/Qualitative debate and feminist research: a subjective view of objectivity. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research (FQS)*, Vol. 2 (1): p.3

²⁸³ Mies, Maria. 1983. Towards a Methodology for feminist research. In Gloria Bowles and Renate D. Klein (eds). *Theories of women’s studies* (pp. 117-140). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, as cited in Westmarland, p. 3

²⁸⁴ Westmarland, p. 4, citing McRobbie, Angela. 1982: The politics of feminist research: between talk, text and action. *Feminist Review*, 12: 46-57; p. 51

²⁸⁵ Westmarland, p.

²⁸⁶ Deutsch, 2004: p.886

²⁸⁷ Reinharz, 1992: 24

²⁸⁸ See for example, Jayaratne, 1983; O’Leary, 1977; as cited in Westmarland, p.3;

²⁸⁹ Taylor, p.365

RESEARCH METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

In-depth, semi-structured and unstructured interviewing

In-depth interviewing is a useful method to gain insight into the world of the participants,²⁹⁰ as it brings a richness and complexity to understanding social life,²⁹¹ enables the researcher to get at the “subjective” understanding that participants bring to a given situation and to understand their experiences.²⁹² The process of conducting in-depth qualitative interviewing as noted by DeShong (2013), facilitates an exploration of participants’ understanding of reality and the meanings produced during this interaction.²⁹³ Feminists are particularly concerned with getting at experiences that are often hidden, thus allowing the researcher to access the voices of the marginalized in society such as women, poor and indigenous peoples.²⁹⁴ As Reinharz (1992) explains,

Interviewing offers researchers access to people’s ideas, thoughts and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher. This asset is particularly important for the study of women because in this way, learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women’s ideas altogether or having men speak for women.²⁹⁵

The forms of in-depth interviewing employed in this study included semi-structured and unstructured interview consistent with feminist commitment towards enabling women to describe their experiences in their own terms, by creating a more egalitarian relationship and sense of emotional closeness between the researcher and the persons studied.²⁹⁶ Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2002) suggest that unstructured interview format does not have an interview guide or a specific list of questions, preferring to ‘go with the flow’ in response to participant’s comments or to seek clarification of answers.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁰ Hesse-Biber, S. and Leavy, P.L. (eds). 2007. *The Practice of Feminist In-depth Interviewing*, in *Feminist Research Practice*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, p. 113

²⁹¹ Smart, Carol. 2009. *Shifting horizons: Reflections on qualitative methods*. *Feminist Theory*. Vol 10 (3) 295-308; p. 296

²⁹² Hesse-Biber, et.al. p. 118

²⁹³ DeShong, 2013, p. 1

²⁹⁴ Hesse-Biber et.al. p. 118

²⁹⁵ Reinharz, S. 1992. *Feminist Methods in social research*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 19 as cited in Hesse-Biber, et.al. p. 118

²⁹⁶ Jayaratne, 1983:145 as cited in Westmarland, p.7

²⁹⁷ Hesse-Biber et.al., p. 114

Unstructured Interview or ‘*Talanoa*:’ an Indigenous method of story-telling

Apart from the 16 in-depth interviews, I gained more information from informal exchanges in ‘*talanoa*’ sessions with individuals or groups of women activists, colleagues and friends. Relationship among this group was fluid and informal and mostly conversational with little structure. One participant called these informal sessions as ‘kofi, kava and konversation’²⁹⁸ (triple K) which represents what is going on during these sessions, with lots of coffee or ‘kava’ (Fijian home brew) consumed, while women sat around and shared their views on the political situation in the country. It was from these ‘*talanoa*’ (story-telling) or ‘*tara koro*’ (community building) sessions that I gleaned more about women’s experiences and responses to militarization. I will return to this subject when I discuss other methods utilized in this study.

Just as women of color scholars had committed to moving their experiences from the margins to the centre of knowledge production and validation,²⁹⁹ indigenous researchers such as Tuhiwai-Smith (1999)³⁰⁰ have explored and offered indigenous research practices as alternatives to the dominant western paradigms that needed to be ‘decolonized.’³⁰¹ In her book, ‘Decolonizing Methodologies,’ Tuhiwai-Smith critiques the notion that work by indigenous peoples can only be identified as ‘legitimate’ and ‘real’ knowledge if it fits within a western framework and has value for the dominant non-indigenous culture.³⁰² This study shares the concerns of Tuhiwai-Smith on the need to deconstruct and ‘decolonize’ western and hence dominant methods of research,³⁰³ which mirrors the struggle by feminist researchers against male-centred and male-dominated (scientific) methods of research as the norm upon which to validate one’s research.

I have therefore incorporated the indigenous Fijian or Pacific method of ‘*talanoa*’ (talking from the heart or storytelling), as a means of capturing the reality of women’s experiences of militarization. Vaiolleti (2006) describes ‘*talanoa*’ “as a derivative of oral tradition...which can be referred to as a conversation, a talk, an exchange of ideas or thinking, whether

²⁹⁸ Fijian female, 40s, professional University graduate, NGO leader, Suva, 30/11/2012

²⁹⁹ See for example, Hooks, B., 1982; Phoenix, 1987; Philipps and McCaskill, 1995;

³⁰⁰ Tuhiwai-Smith. 1999. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books; see also

³⁰¹ Wilson, Carla. 2001. Book Review on Tuhiwai-Smith, L. 1999, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, in *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, Issue 7: p. 215

³⁰² Wilson, Carla. 2001; p. 214

³⁰³ Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999

formal or informal.”³⁰⁴ I would place ‘*talanoa*’ along with unstructured interview method, where there is a free flow of talk, dialogue or exchange between the researcher and participant without a rigid set of questions or interview guide.

While ‘*talanoa*’ has increasingly been recognized as an indigenous Pacific research methodology³⁰⁵ and a tool for good governance,³⁰⁶ it is applied in this study as a means of capturing the informal, face to face, story-telling sessions that I sat in, observed and took note of, not only during the field research in Fiji, but throughout the information-gathering process and write-up. The cultural aspect of ‘*talanoa*’ allows those present to engage in social conversation which can lead to critical discussions or knowledge creation that allows for rich contextual and interrelated information to surface as co-constructed stories.”³⁰⁷ Black and women of color feminists have similarly offered a methodological stance that is dialogic or conversational in approach, which views the relationship between researcher and participants as collaborative and equal and does not discount the “importance of spiritual as well as material, that is concrete, everyday concerns.”³⁰⁸

Sitting in ‘empathetic engagement’ while women related their differential experiences of militarisation or expressed anger or frustration through stories, jokes or gossip, I am reminded by Smart (2009) that “amongst these facets of everyday life that research has not really grasped, have also been emotions and feelings.”³⁰⁹ Some of these stories took on the ‘realm of the imaginary’ which according to Smart, are part of the participants’ “selves in process” which are not fixed at the point of interview but part of their own past.”³¹⁰ Smart also admits that much of the richness is eliminated when turning talk into the written word as the “process of transcription robs speech of a great deal of its texture, even if pauses, laughter and tears, are indicated in the text.”³¹¹ She notes that “interviews”

³⁰⁴ Vaoleti, Timote. 2006. *Talanoa Research Methodology: a developing position on Pacific Research*. Waikato Journal of Education, 12: 23

³⁰⁵ In addition to Vaoleti [2006]; see also. Nabobo-Baba. 2006. *Knowledge and Learning: an indigenous Fijian approach*. Suva: IPS, University of the South Pacific; Nabobo-Baba, 2007. *Vanua Research Framework*. Suva: Institute of Education, USP; Otsuka, S. 2006;

³⁰⁶ See for example, Halapua, Sitiveni. 2013. *Talanoa in Building Democracy and Governance*. A paper prepared for the Conference, “Future Leaders of the Pacific,” Pagopago, American Samoa: 1-6;

³⁰⁷ Vaoleti, 2006, p. 24

³⁰⁸ Collins, 1990 as quoted in Phillips and McCaskill, 1995: 1011;

³⁰⁹ Smart, 2009: p. 298

³¹⁰ *ibid*

³¹¹ Smart, pp.295-6

require respondents to provide a linear narrative, which is then “flattened” onto a page of typescript, robbed of a great deal of expression and non-verbal communication.³¹²

When ‘*talanoa*’ transforms into “kofi, kava and konversation” sessions, it reinforces the idea that ‘talk is a fundamental human activity that is systematized in research,’³¹³ such that, as women of color feminists have argued, the dialogue and storytelling become the ‘metaphors’ for knowledge construction and validation.³¹⁴ As Mullings (1999) argues, ‘knowledge’ is never pure but is situated in the complex and sometimes contradictory social locations of producers and audiences.³¹⁵

As I reflected upon the jokes, stories, imaginations, rumours and gossip shared during those ‘*talanoa*’ sessions, I was convinced that these sessions became sites of protest and resistance,³¹⁶ a stage “for affecting change, for imagining otherwise, for creating new narratives in the process of knowledge management and knowledge sharing.”³¹⁷ A retired primary school teacher shared for example, that in the early days following the 2006 coup, she used to imagine being camouflaged and hiding with a gun on a hill above the military barracks in Nabua, and would shoot at anyone who came out in uniform. Such was her loathing for the men in military uniform for their “*dokadoka*” (pride) and “*viavialevu*” (arrogance).³¹⁸ Another woman shared that every time “this guy” appeared on TV, she would turn it off in disgust or by swearing.³¹⁹ For both women, their responses were sites of protest and resistance to be able to cope with the unpleasant situation they found themselves in.

Content Analysis

This study integrates ‘content’ textual analysis as another method for interrogating the gendered conditions of militarization from women’s perceptions in Fiji. According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2007) ‘content analysis’ is the systematic study of texts and other cultural

³¹²Smart, pp.295-6

³¹³ DeVault, M. and G. Gross, 2007 as cited in DeShong, 2013, p. 3

³¹⁴ Ibid, p.1011

³¹⁵ Mullings, B. 1999. Insider or outsider, both or neither: some dilemmas of interviewing in a cross-cultural setting. *Geoforum*, 30: 337-350; p. 337

³¹⁶ Taylor, p.369

³¹⁷ Bell, 2010 in Ali, Mona I. 2014. Stories/storytelling for women’s empowerment/empowering stories. *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 45: 98;

³¹⁸ Fijian female retired school teacher, early 60s, Suva, 13/12/2012

³¹⁹ Fijian female, late 50s, NGO worker, Suva,

products or non-living data forms.³²⁰ Because this analysis draws on pre-existing written texts, the particular content analysis used here is textual analysis.³²¹ The data used for textual analysis exist independently of the research process, that is, it is not created or co-created from the interview exchange, but rather from pre-existing data such as newspaper articles, workshop reports, submissions, etc., which are imbued with two unique qualities: the data are pre-existing and thus naturalistic, and the data are non-interactive.³²² These two qualities give the data a level of authenticity³²³ which is useful for feminist research validation of knowledge.

The texts identified for analysis include the Women's Forum Outcome Statements,³²⁴ newspaper articles, submissions by 10 Women's groups to the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) in 2012; 10 individual women's submissions to the CRC, women's submissions and reports to various UN and international bodies between September 2012 to the elections of September 2014, and various NGO workshop reports on topics and issues related to the research between 2000 to 2018. The general questions that guide the analysis of the texts include: how the different intersectional identities of gender, race, class, age, sexuality, etc. is represented in the text; whose point of view dominates; how are masculinity and femininity constructed, contested or studied; whose viewpoints are silenced or marginalized within the particular texts and what the text tell us about women's agency and powers of resistance.³²⁵ As Reinharz (1992) affirms, 'texts can be sources of...feminist resistance' which may also be a part of feminist textual analysis project.³²⁶

In the process of transcribing, translating, coding and analysis of the data, I found myself fully immersed in the text. I therefore utilised an 'immersive interpretive' method, as I had become thoroughly familiar with the text, which allows me to easily identify the key themes and interpret the nuances around them. I found this method to be particularly well suited to research given my own positionality.

³²⁰ Hesse-Biber, S. and P. Leavy. (eds.) 2007. *The Feminist Practice of Content Analysis*, in *Feminist Research Practice*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, p. 227

³²¹ Hesse-Biber et.al. p. 234

³²² Reinharz, S.1992. p.147

³²³ Reinharz, 1992; Hesse-Biber et.al. 2006; 2007: p.227

³²⁴ Outcome Doc 1 dated 10-12 April 2012; Outcome Doc2 of June 5–6, 2012; Outcome Doc3, dated 3–4 Dec. 2012;

³²⁵ Hesse-Biber et.al. p. 227

³²⁶ Reinharz, p. 147

Sampling in Qualitative versus Quantitative research

A concern of feminist researchers with positivist (scientific) and hence quantitative research has to do with sampling. Hesse-Biber et.al., claim that since the logic of qualitative research is concerned with in-depth understanding, it usually involves working with small samples because the goal is to look at the “process’ or the ‘meanings’ that individuals attribute to their given social situation, rather than making generalizations as in quantitative research.³²⁷ Patton (2002) emphasises further that, “there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry,” since determining the sample size depends on research questions, economic resources, and the particular context within which one is practicing her research project.³²⁸ Thus, the sample size of 16 interviewees for semi-structured interview was considered sufficient for the two-week duration of the field research in Suva, Fiji, where funding constraint was a key factor.

Intersectionality in Research Participant sample

Of the 16 women that participated in the semi-structured interview, 2 are in the 30s, 2 in the 40s, 3 in their 50s, 4 in the 60s and 5 in their 70s. The initial plan was to have more interviewees who had experienced all four coups in Fiji hence the majority of participants are between the 50-70s age group (12), with only 4 in their 30s-40s. Four women were interviewed in their homes, seven in their offices, and I met five for coffee (‘kofi, konversation’) while we *‘talanoa’* on the research topic and questions.

Of the four women interviewed in their homes, three are heads of their households, having organized their children’s or grandchildren’s dinner and sleep before I arrived. The fourth, an indigenous woman in her late 70s, lived in a village close to Suva and was plaiting mat when I arrived. I asked her to continue weaving while we *‘talanoa’* as I wanted to create an informal atmosphere to avoid the unequal and distant relationship that feminists rejected about positivist or scientific research, or which had prompted Tuhiwai-Smith to claim why “research” is probably a dirty word in the indigenous vocabulary. As researcher, I did not wish to feel that I was in a more powerful position than the participants, since they are the sources and owners of the knowledge that I needed for my thesis, hence it was a symbiotic relationship.

³²⁷ Hesse-Biber, et.al. p.119

³²⁸ Ibid, citing Patton, M. 2002. *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA:Sage, as cited in Hesse-Biber, p. 119

I was mindful of Oakley's (1981) suggestion that a 'non-hierarchical' and 'non-oppressive' relationship³²⁹ should prevail between myself as a woman interviewing women, considering that women have generally experienced gender subordination in their lifetime, thus researchers must take care not to further exploit the relationship.³³⁰ This brings me to the critical feminist research element of reflexivity.

Positionality and Reflexivity

Feminist researchers reject the 'positivist' (scientific) notion of a neutral, objective researcher who must remain separate from the participants so as not to contaminate the data with her subjectivity.³³¹ In its place, feminist inquiry offers 'reflexivity,' which refers to the notion that subjective experience, including actions and feelings that derive from the researcher's own social location, influences the production and interpretation of research data.³³² Feminist researchers also highlight the importance of 'positionality,' which refers to the researcher's awareness of her own subjective experience in relation to the participants, which is key in acknowledging the limits of objectivity.³³³ Positionality is based on the belief that all methodologies are shaped to a certain extent by the interests and position of the researchers that deploy them.³³⁴ Feminists argue that it is impossible not to feel emotionally connected to the lives of those within that circle, for to deny such influences is to deny the humanity of both the researcher and the participant.³³⁵

'Positionality' and 'reflexivity' involve describing how researchers explore their situatedness as researchers and the multiple and shifting identities and agendas that shape the knowledge they produce.³³⁶ As Mullings (1999) claims,

A researcher's knowledge is ...always partial because [her] positionality (perspectives shaped by [her] unique mix of race, class, gender, nationality, sexuality, and other identifiers), as well as location in time and space will influence how the world is viewed and interpreted.³³⁷

³²⁹ Oakley, A. 1981. 'Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms,' in H. Roberts (ed.) *Doing Feminist Research*. London. Routledge and Kegan Paul, p.41

³³⁰ Acker, et.al. 1983, p. 325

³³¹ Ibid, p. 427; see for example, Dubois, 1983; Cook and Fonow, 1990;

³³² Taylor, 1998, p. 368

³³³ Deutsch, p. 889;

³³⁴ Bonacich, 1989; see Taylor, p. 368

³³⁵ ibid

³³⁶ Nazneen and Sultan, 2014; p. 63

³³⁷ Mullings, 1999, p. 337

Positionality, analysis of power relations and transformative knowledge production are issues and practices that feminist researchers grapple with during field work and in the analysis and presentation of findings.³³⁸ Self-reflexivity is a traditional part of feminist research that requires acknowledging the multiple positions a researcher occupies both in relation to her participants and to the rest of the world.³³⁹

As a researcher following in the feminist epistemology, I was deeply conscious of generating reflexive knowledge, reducing power differentials between myself and the participants, the 'insider-outsider' relationship and the significance of gendered relations of power as a feature of social life. Taylor makes a similar claim that "[w]ho we are is spoken into existence in every aspect of the research endeavour."³⁴⁰ Indeed, as DeShong (2013) cautions, it is essential to consider our own biographies and biases even as we seek to make claims about the lives of those we study.³⁴¹

"Insider-Outsider" dilemma

Dwyer and Buckle (2009) question whether qualitative researchers should be members of the population they are studying.³⁴² This question is relevant to the conduct of this study since I belong to the same race, and hence cultural and linguistic group as the women I was studying. "Insider" research as Kahuna (2000) notes, refers to researchers conducting research with populations of which they are members,³⁴³ such that the researcher shares an identity, language, and experiential base with the study participants.³⁴⁴

The benefits of being an insider researcher include: a high level of acceptance and trust as participants are more willing to share their experiences because there is an assumption of understanding as if they feel, "You are one of us."³⁴⁵ It also allows a certain amount of legitimacy as participants are more open so there is a greater depth to the data gathered.

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³³⁸ Nazneed, Sohela and Maheen, Sultan. 2014. Positionality and transformative knowledge in conducting 'feminist' research on empowerment in Bangladesh. *Women's Studies International Forum* 45, p. 63

³³⁹ Deutsch, N. 2004, p. 890; For further information on reflexivity and positionality in feminist research, see also Cook and Fonow, 1990; Mies, 1983; Wolf, 1996;

³⁴⁰ Taylor, p. 368

³⁴¹ DeShong, 2013, p. 1

³⁴² Dwyer, S. and J. Buckle. 2009. The Space Between: On being an insider-outsider in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, Vol. 8 (1) p. 54

³⁴³ As cited in Dwyer et.al. p. 58

³⁴⁴ Asselin, 2003; as cited in Dwyer, et.al. p. 58

³⁴⁵ Dwyer and Buckle, p. 58

³⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 58

Like Muhanna (2014) who returned to the Gaza where she grew up to conduct her doctoral research, my research positionality obliged me to acknowledge that my research participants and I shared spatial history,³⁴⁷ a history that included shared location, work spaces, schools, cultural spaces and historical events before I left Fiji to join my family in Auckland in 2010. My research participants and I have experienced common life cycles: as daughters, sisters, wives, mothers, grandmothers, school and university mates, workmates as teachers, as activists advocating for democracy and the rule of law following the 2006 coup, and our common experiences of previous coups in 1987 and 2000. We shared the intersectional gender and ethnicity positionalities, although there were variations in our age, class, status, ability, religion, and sexuality through which we negotiated and contested with the structures and culture of militarism and patriarchy in the private and public domains.³⁴⁸ Hall (1990) states that “identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by and position ourselves within.”³⁴⁹

Dwyer and Buckle (2009) acknowledge however, that being a member of a group does not denote complete sameness within that group.³⁵⁰ Mullings (1999) also states that as qualitative researchers we have an appreciation for the fluidity and multi-layered complexity of human experience,³⁵¹ so there is a need to recognize that not all experiences can be shared by everyone in any given group.³⁵²

Although I shared common characteristics with my research participants, there were structural differences in our experiences and positionalities. As an activist like most of them before I left Fiji, returning to conduct research meant straddling the “insider-outsider” divide. ‘Insider’ because I still considered myself a member of the women’s movement in Fiji which I regard as home and visit every year, but I also felt like an ‘outsider’ because since being away from Fiji, I have begun to create an identity as a new (academic) researcher.³⁵³

³⁴⁷ Muhanna, Aitemad. 2014. When the researcher becomes a subject of ethnographic research: studying “myself” and “others” in Gaza. *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 45:[112-118]; p. 112

³⁴⁸ Muhanna, 2014, *ibid*

³⁴⁹ Hall, 1990; p. 223 as cited in Dwyer and Buckle, 2009: p. 60

³⁵⁰ Dwyer and Buckle, p. 60

³⁵¹ Mullings, 1999, p. 337

³⁵² Dwyer and Buckle, p. 60

³⁵³ Nazneed and Sultan, 2014, p. 67; Deutsch, 2004; p. 885

This truth was brought home to me when a research participant shared that a senior member of a women's organization had remarked upon hearing that I was coming back to conduct research, "Uh... uh....so what is she coming back to do research for?" As I reflected on that remark, I was conscious that for some of these women with whom I had shared close spaces, I may be considered, in the words of black feminist Audre Lorde, a "sister-outsider."³⁵⁴ Notwithstanding a doctoral research, I was still part of them even if now lived overseas, for which I would eternally be reminded by activist sisters that at least, "you have a choice."

Being considered a 'sister-outsider' allows me the space to stand back and reflect objectively on women's experiences of militarization in Fiji, as I am now better informed by the theories and writings of others before me. Fay (1996) states that "there is no self-understanding without other understanding."³⁵⁵ This means that, noting the ways in which we are different from others requires that we also note the way in which we are similar. According to Dwyer and Buckle, (2009), this is the origin of the space between, the foundation that allows the position of both insider and outsider.³⁵⁶ As 'sister-outsider,' I have a better perspective from the space between, since occupying the space between affords one a deeper knowledge of the experience one studies.³⁵⁷

Dwyer and Buckle suggest that,

there are complexities inherent in occupying the space between. Perhaps as researchers we can only ever occupy the space between. We may be closer to the insider position or closer to the outsider position, but because our perspective is shaped by our position as researcher (which includes having read much literature on the research topic), we cannot fully occupy one or the other of those positions.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁴Lorde, Audre. 1984. "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action." In *Sister-Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, 40-4, Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press; as cited in Washington, Patricia and Betty Harris. *Women of Color Standpoint*. *NWSA Journal*, Vol 13 (2) pp 80-83

³⁵⁵ Fay, 1996: 241 in Dwyer and Buckle, p. 60

³⁵⁶ Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; p. 60

³⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 61

³⁵⁸ Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; p. 60

The core ingredient is not 'insider or outsider' status but an ability to be open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in the experience of one's research participants and committed to accurately and adequately representing their experience³⁵⁹ This is the goal of the current study.

Conclusion

This chapter outlines the feminist research methodology that has guided the conduct of this research. While it acknowledges that there is no one feminist methodology of conducting research, it notes the general principles that are generally accepted to be characteristic of a feminist research. It also recognizes that these principles do not represent a rigid model of doing feminist research. In general, a feminist research focuses on gender and gender equality, shines a spotlight on women's everyday experiences as sources of knowledge, applies participatory methods of gathering knowledge that are egalitarian and non-oppressive, promotes reflexivity as a source of insight into the researcher's relation with the participants, and has a transformative and action-oriented component. The chapter also discuss feminist critiques of the scientific method of conducting research in particular the positivist notion of objectivity and value-free research which feminists argue can hardly be met in practice.

In terms of undertaking the actual research project, the chapter discusses the methods and techniques that were employed in gathering information from women in Fiji. Elements of practical research were examined including ethical considerations for informed consent and confidentiality, the research site and recruitment of participants. Then research methods and techniques that are consistent with qualitative, feminist and indigenous research practice were discussed which included in-depth semi-structured interviewing, unstructured '*talanoa*' and '*tara koro*' as indigenous methods of story-telling and community building. It also examined the research methods of content or textual analysis, sampling in qualitative research compared to quantitative research. Finally, the importance of the principles of positionality and reflexivity were examined, which feminists have offered as alternatives to the positivist notion of a neutral, objective researcher. 'Positionality' and 'reflexivity' involve describing how researchers explore their situatedness as researchers and their multiple and shifting identities and agendas that shape the

³⁵⁹ Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; p. 60

knowledge they produce. Throughout the information gathering and analysis process, I have considered my position as a “sister outsider” in relation to the identities I share with the research participants. This chapter guides the practical component of information-gathering that are to be analysed in the remaining chapters.

CHAPTER 4

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF CHANGING ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN FIJI POLITICS

From Pre-Contact Era to 1987 Coups

Introduction

On 5 December 2006, the Fiji Military Forces (FMF) under the command of Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama ousted the government of Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase in Fiji's fourth military coup d'état since independence in 1970. The Qarase government suffered a fate similar to that of the Bavadra government on 14 May 1987, and the Chaudhry government on May 19 2000, all of whom were ousted from office by the military or elements within the military. As discussion on Fiji's political history inevitably revolve around the coups, concerns were raised that Fiji now suffers from a 'coup culture'³⁶⁰ or 'coup syndrome'³⁶¹ at the hands of the Fiji military. The notion of a 'coup culture' suggests a pattern of instability that is repeatedly being played out³⁶² through the aggressive display of a 'culturally-sanctioned hegemonic masculinity' by Fijian men in the military.

What factors have contributed to the Fiji military's propensity to interfere in the nation's political governance over time? In the context of the "coup culture" in Fiji, this perplexing question shall be addressed in this chapter through three key objectives: first, to trace the historical evolvement of the Fiji military forces from pre-colonial era to post-independent Fiji; second, to identify the institutional and structural factors that have shaped the Fiji military's perception of its role in national politics; and third, to apply a gender and intersectional analysis on how these factors have reinforced the construction of a gender ideology in the Fiji military that is manifested through a hegemonic militarised masculinity that intersects with race, status, class and religion, to produce a highly militarized society in post-independent Fiji.

The words 'native,' 'indigenous' and 'ethnic' Fijian are used interchangeably in this chapter and in the thesis to refer to the descendants of the original inhabitants of Fiji, while the

³⁶⁰ See for example, Draunidalo, T. 2014. The 2014 Elections and the Coup Culture. Address at the "Return to Democracy Workshop, Australian National University (ANU), Canberra, 5/11/2014; Tarte, S. 2009. Reflections on Fiji's 'coup culture,' In Fraenkel, J., Firth, S. and Lal. B. (eds). The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: a coup to end all coups? Canberra: ANU E-Press, Ch. 27: p. 409;

³⁶¹ Fraenkel, J. and Firth, S. 2009. Fiji's Coup Syndrome, in Fraenkel, et.al. The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: a coup to end all coups? Canberra: ANU E-Press, Ch.31: p. 449;

³⁶² Tarte, S. 2009: p. 409;

category 'Indian' is used to refer to the descendants of indentured labourers from the Indian sub-continent or immigrants of Indian descent, according to the definition of "Fijian" and 'Indian' in the 1970³⁶³ and 1990 constitutions.³⁶⁴ The term "Indo-Fijian" shall also be used to reflect the more inclusive human rights context of the post-1997 constitution era.

I. PRE-CONTACT ERA: Pre-1830s

To make sense of the events surrounding the military coups between 1987 and 2006, demands a closer scrutiny of the historical context that had provided the 'enabling' conditions for the Fiji military to intervene in national politics. In this section, I trace the evolution of the Fiji military from pre-colonial to post-independence era and identify the key factors that have contributed to the conditions for warfare and militarization during each period. A gender analysis is then applied to demonstrate the construction of a culturally-sanctioned hegemonic gender ideology that intersects with race, status and religion, to produce the "enabling" militarized conditions for the military coups by the Fiji military.

Tribal warfare and '*Turaga-bati*' ideology

The '*Turaga-bati*' (chief-warrior) ideology was a key component of the 'patronage' relationship between the chief and his warriors during tribal warfare conditions of the pre-colonial era. Early accounts of nineteenth century Fiji depicted a turbulent and violent society in which warfare was the dominant political activity.³⁶⁵ Inter-tribal feuds and rivalries among leading chiefs, divided the Fijians.³⁶⁶ The missionary Rev. Waterhouse observed that hostility among different tribes made 'war' the principal employment of males.³⁶⁷ Tavola also notes that accounts of Fiji as a violent society in pre-contact era often associated it with the common practices of cannibalism, infanticide, widow strangling and

³⁶³ Fiji Constitution, 1970. S. 134, p. 106/112;

³⁶⁴ Fiji constitution, 1990. S. 156, on the 'Meaning of "Fijian," "Rotuman" and "Indian," pp 162-3;

³⁶⁵ See for example, Thomson, 1908; 1981; Williams, 1858; 1982; Waterhouse, 1866; and later Deane, 1962; Morrell, 1960; Orr, 1977. These works are cited in Sutherland, W.1992. Beyond the politics of race. An Alternative history of Fiji to 1992, Canberra: ANU; p.7; See also, Routledge, D. 1985. Matanitu: the struggle for power in early Fiji. Suva: USP; France, P.1969. The Charter of the Land: Custom and Colonization in Fiji. Melbourne: Oxford University Press; Clunie, F. 1977. Fijian Weapons and Warfare. Fiji Museum Bulletin, No. 2. Suva: Fiji Museum;

³⁶⁶ Derrick, R.A. 1946, Reprinted 1974. A History of Fiji, Vol. 1. Fiji Government Press: Suva; p. 130;

³⁶⁷ Rev Waterhouse.1866. The King and people of Fiji, pp 315-316 as cited in Clunie, 1977: p.4; see also Halapua. W. 2003. Tradition, Lotu and Militarism in Fiji. Lautoka: Fiji Institute of Applied Studies: p.25; Goiran, H. 2008. Commodore Bainimarama: military dictator or true democrat? New Zealand International Review (March 2008): p.8; and Teaiawa, Teresia. 2005. Articulated Cultures: Militarism and Masculinities in Fiji during the Mid-1990s. Fijian Studies Vol. 3 (2): p. 212

slavery.³⁶⁸ A Fijian woman interviewee³⁶⁹ had compared the coups to the type of double-dealing and treachery typical of the phrase '*vere vaka-Bau*'³⁷⁰ (conspiracy Bau-style), which refers to "the art of being sneaky, devious, deceitful, scheming, double-dealing and treachery commonly exploited by Baun chiefs against rival chiefs" in pre-contact era.³⁷¹ Responding to the killing of Roko Tui Dreketi Banuve (Chief of Rewa province) by Cakobau (Chief of Bau) in the Rewa-Bau war of 1845 even after Banuve had surrendered, Rev Waterhouse had stated that,

Fijian politics are as mysterious as the black art itself, and indeed bear some resemblance to it: there is so much of the devil in all their movements that he may well be called the 'god of this world.' It is impossible to know what their intentions are, especially with the Bau chiefs.³⁷²

Observers of pre-colonial Fiji saw a land "enmeshed in treachery and counter-plots,"³⁷³ distrust and suspicion,³⁷⁴ where men dared not move about unarmed,³⁷⁵ which prompted Rev. John Hunt to assert that, "the success of their conflicts does not result from their courage...but from their skill in stratagem."³⁷⁶

Natives who were known as '*i Taukei*' ('owners' of the land) lived in village units held together by firmly integrated clan relationships and strong group solidarity, headed by a

³⁶⁸ Tavola, H. 1991. Secondary Education in Fiji: A key to the Future. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, U.S.P. p. 7.

³⁶⁹ Fijian woman interviewee, 50s, Auckland, April 2013;

³⁷⁰ Routledge, 1985: p. 82

³⁷¹ see Sahlins M. 2004. Apologies to Thucydides: Understanding history as culture and vice versa. London: University of Chicago Press, p.18; Sahlins elucidates this phrase thus: "The history of 19th century Fiji is often encapsulated in the (still current) proverbial expression "conspiracy a' la Bau (*vere vaka-Bau*) and illustrates this by citing Hale's (1846:51,58) summary of Fijian politics during this period that he found surprisingly comparable with those of the Greeks: "To weaken a rival state by secretly exciting its dependencies to revolt, to stir up one class of society against another in order to take advantage of their dissensions, to make an advantageous treaty with a powerful foe by sacrificing a weak ally, to corrupt the fidelity of adherents by bribing them with the anticipated spoils of war, to gain a battle before it is fought by tampering with the leaders of the opposing force, all these and many other tricks of the Machiavellian school, are perfectly familiar to the subtle chieftains of Viti;

³⁷² Sahlins, 2004: p. 18, 21

³⁷³ Ravuvu. A. 1991. The Façade of Democracy: Fijian Struggles for Political Control 1830-1987. Suva: Reader Publishing House: p.1

³⁷⁴ Routledge, 1985, pp 56-58

³⁷⁵ Clunie, 1977, p.2

³⁷⁶ *ibid*, p.29

'*turaga*' or chief.³⁷⁷ A chief's authority and status was legitimized through elaborate rituals of installation,³⁷⁸ and a chief was able to consolidate his power through the military exploits and conquests of his '*bati*'³⁷⁹ or 'warriors,' who were responsible for the protection and defence of the '*turaga*' (chief) and the '*vanua*' (community).³⁸⁰ Martial tradition was thoroughly embedded in Fijian culture, with warfare forming an integral part of traditional social life.³⁸¹ Warriors in pre-contact times were set apart as an elite unit and accorded great consideration, with special feasts and rewards for their services in war.³⁸²

The '*bati*' ideology bears significance only in a reciprocal relationship to "*turagaism*", (chieftainship) through a feudal system in which the '*bati*' clan owes allegiance to the chief in return for patronage and personal favours.³⁸³ The '*turaga-bati* relationship seems to be consistent with Feaver's conception of 'principal-agent' where specialization in community defence tends to have occurred well before the emergence of professional militaries:

Once individuals band together in a community, the problem of agency arises. ...But ... [just] as individuals rely on a few producers to provide the goods society needs to subsist, so they will rely on the designated defenders to provide security for the group. The problem of agency [becomes] inherent in the specialization that results from communal living.³⁸⁴

³⁷⁷ Halapua.W. 2003. Tradition, Lotu and Militarism. Lautoka: Fiji Institute of Applied Studies: pp 5-6; 46. See also, Tavola, 1991: p. 6; Both Halapua (2003: 22-23) and Tavola, (1991: 6) note that the centrality of the role of the chief was due to the belief that he was the living representative of the 'kalou vu' or ancestral god hence drew 'mana' or prestige from the respect accorded to the spirit god. A chief symbolized unity, order, stability and reciprocity for the tribal unit, and to assist the chief in managing the security of tribal life were groups with specialized roles and skills such as the '*bete*' (priest), '*matanivanua*' (spokesperson or herald), and the '*bati*' (warriors).

³⁷⁸ Kaplan, M. 1989. 'Luveniawai as the British saw it: Constructions of custom and disorder in colonial Fiji' in Ethnohistory, Vol.36 (4): p.357

³⁷⁹ Tavola, p.6.

³⁸⁰ Halapua, 2003, pp. 5-6.

³⁸¹ Halapua, p. 46

³⁸² Fison, L. 1903. Land tenure in Fiji. Suva: Government Printer, p.17 as cited in Halapua, 2003, p.46

³⁸³ Halapua, 2003, p.8

³⁸⁴ Feaver, P. 2011. Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight and Civil-Military Relations. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2nd Edition, p.54; Employing "principal-agent" theory from economics, Feaver attempts to explain how principals (elected civilian leaders or chiefs in this case) gets the agent (the military, or warriors in this case) to carry out their orders. Feaver's conception is a response to Samuel Huntington's (1957) masterpiece, 'The Soldier and the State,' (1957) in which he challenges how "to reconcile a military strong enough to do anything the civilians ask them to do with a military subordinate enough to do only what the civilians authorise them to do." (p.149);

The '*bati*' agency needs further analysis in historical accounts especially as Routledge (1985:43) recounts, that warlords or *Vunivalu* like Naulivou of Bau, increased in power and took over from

In pre-colonial era, the 'bati' expressed 'agency' by providing security for the chief and the community. There were historical instances when the 'bati' or warrior agency distinguished themselves on the battlefields to the point of unseating the chiefs. This was the case of Ratu Naulivou of Bau whose influence as Vunivalu (warlord) increased while the power of his sacred chief the Roko Tui Bau declined, so that he took on certain of the attributes of the sacred chief from whom authority and the integrity of the social order flowed."³⁸⁵

A notable feature of the warrior culture was the worship of a deity to whom certain rituals are performed prior to battles to obtain inspiration and create special invulnerable warriors, a reputation gained by the hill tribes of Viti Levu.³⁸⁶ As war and worship became increasingly intertwined,³⁸⁷ the role of the 'bete' (priesthood) gained more prominence, a practice which has persisted to the modern era. The Methodist Church in Fiji for example appoints a Military chaplain for the pastoral care and spiritual well-being of church members who make up the majority of military personnel.³⁸⁸ The Chaplain assumes the rank of a commissioned officer,³⁸⁹ which suggests the importance of religion in the military service. In recent years the Church has made similar appointments for the police force and the corrections services.³⁹⁰

Gender Construction in Tribal Warfare

Socialization and childrearing during pre-colonial era was a shared task across generations of relatives, particularly grandparents.³⁹¹ Just as gender roles were taught at an early age, children were also taught the importance of respect and knowing one's place in the highly ordered Fijian society.³⁹² Initiation ceremonies for boys were landmark events, marking the end of childhood and entry into manhood through circumcision at puberty. The equivalent puberty rituals for girls involved a pattern of elaborate tattooing on the thighs and buttocks and the wearing of a short skirt in place of childhood nudity.³⁹³

ruling chiefs while the power of the sacred chiefs diminished as in the relationship between the *Roko Tui Bau* and the *Vunivalu* in Bau.

³⁸⁵ Routledge, 1985, p.43

³⁸⁶ Kaplan, M. 1989: p.353

³⁸⁷ Ibid, pp 349-371; see also, Halapua, p.24 who cited Sovaki, 1992: 24;

³⁸⁸ Delaivoni, C. Fiji Sun, 28/08/2008. Army Chaplain reports to us: Church, in <http://fijisun.com.fj/2008/08/28/army-chaplain-reports-to-us-church/>

³⁸⁹ Delaivoni, C. Fiji Sun, 28/08/2008. Army Chaplain reports to us: Church, in <http://fijisun.com.fj/2008/08/28/army-chaplain-reports-to-us-church/>

³⁹⁰ ibid

³⁹¹ Tavola, p.6

³⁹² ibid

³⁹³ Tavola, pp 6-7

Warfare training during pre-contact period was a means by which young males were initiated into adulthood as hunters and warrior-protectors.³⁹⁴ Tippet recorded that, “in a pre-Christian view of life, the stages by means of which a youth became a man were important social events, and these were invariably tied up with war.”³⁹⁵ Halapua affirms that,

tribal wars were a way of life and in the division of labour, every male born was expected to be a warrior. In the Fijian tradition, the rite of passage for a young male becoming a man in the tribe was demonstrated at times of tribal wars. His skill in the way he performed with his war club in killing the intruders gave him the status of a man and a defender of the tribe.³⁹⁶

The specialization of clans into occupational roles such as the *turaga* (chiefs), *matanivanua* (chief’s herald), *bete* (priests), *bati* (warriors), *mataisau* (carpenters) and *gonedau* (fishermen),³⁹⁷ confirms early notions of “rank, hierarchy and status in traditional Fijian social structure.”³⁹⁸ Halapua argues that rather than being hierarchical, the occupational framework exposes the interconnectedness of life and activities of a tribal unit held together by the centrality of the chief.³⁹⁹ However, Routledge maintains that functional specialization was a mark of “social stratification” that conditions the nature of socio-political relations.⁴⁰⁰

The principal causes of war in pre-contact era include disputes over women, land, and insult to chiefs, but murder and the determination to check a chief’s despotism could also trigger war.⁴⁰¹ Cockburn notes that the construction of gender ideology was most evident in the sexual division of warfare, where the male warrior dominated public space as the hunter,

³⁹⁴ Halapua, 2003, p. 25

³⁹⁵ cited in Halapua, 2003, p.25

³⁹⁶ Halapua, p.25

³⁹⁷ Occupational roles apart from the chiefly clan, include the *bête* (priesthood), *bati* (warrior), *matanivanua* (chief’s heralds), *mataisau* (carpenters) and *gonedau* (fishermen).

³⁹⁸ Emde Sina. 2005. Politicisation of Ethnicity during the Fiji Coup in May 2000. *Oceania*, 74 (4) p. 400

³⁹⁹ Halapua, p.23

⁴⁰⁰ Routledge, p 213

⁴⁰¹ Ravuvu, 1991, p.2; Clunie, 1977, p.4; Routledge, 1985, p.68, describes how the Bau-Rewa war between 1843–45 began with an incident involving the Radini Dreketi (wife of Roko Tui Dreketi, the paramount chief of Rewa) who fled back to Bau from her husband’s court, ‘supposedly on account of some impropriety.’ Instead of being sent back ‘in disgrace’ to her husband as custom demanded, she was kept back by her Bau relatives, her high rank being a protection. For Rewa this was an affront to the honour of Roko Tui Dreketi, and war became inevitable, which may have been Bau’s real motive.

protector and defender while women were confined to the domestic sphere to fulfil the gendered roles of mothering, nurturing, and caring.⁴⁰² Although Cockburn was referring to the context of militarisation and warfare in her native South Africa, it could well apply to the warfare conditions of pre-colonial Fiji.

While women were not included in combat units during tribal warfare, Clunie had documented accounts of women fighting alongside men in battle.⁴⁰³ Women's role in warfare included feeding the warriors and providing useful albeit dangerous support roles as informers or spies, such as stationing themselves on hills and calling down information on the enemy's movements to their own warriors, or luring the enemy into ambush.⁴⁰⁴ They also played a significant role in ceremonies to mark the victorious return of warriors,⁴⁰⁵ when certain chiefs would reward their 'allies' by turning over the women of the village for their temporary 'comfort.'⁴⁰⁶ Women associated a man's heroism in war and with warrior-masculinity and sexual prowess which also serves as a "political legitimator of chiefly rule."⁴⁰⁷ This affirms the claim that martial life in pre-colonial Fiji emerged out of deeply embodied notions of masculinity, spirituality and society.⁴⁰⁸

II. POST-CONTACT TO PRE-COLONIAL ERA 1830s-1874

Increased contact after the 1830s between Fijians and Europeans such as shipwrecked beachcombers, sandalwood traders and missionaries on civilizing mission, greatly influenced the social, political and religious conditions in Fiji.⁴⁰⁹ A lasting impact was the introduction of muskets that were sourced from shipwrecks, trade or plunder,⁴¹⁰ into warfare between rival chiefs.

⁴⁰² Cockburn, C. 2008. 'Gender as driving force in militarization and war.' Keynote lecture for the Conference, 'The War Question for Feminism'. Orebro University, Sweden; p.4; see also Jacklyn Cock. 1992. 'Women, the Military and Militarisation,' Seminar No.7 Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

⁴⁰³ Clunie, 1977, p.9, 12;

⁴⁰⁴ *ibid*, p.19

⁴⁰⁵ cited in Halapua, 2003: p. 25

⁴⁰⁶ Halapua, 2003: p. 25

⁴⁰⁷ Sutherland, W. 1992. *Beyond the politics of race: an alternative history of Fiji to 1992*. Canberra: ANU, p.11:

⁴⁰⁸ Quoted in Teaiwa, 2005, p. 202

⁴⁰⁹ Ravuvu, 1991, p.2

⁴¹⁰ Routledge, 1985, pp 43-45, 47- 53;

European influence and Role of Firearms

The critical role of firearms in pre-colonial power consolidation needs to be highlighted, particularly in the way that leading chiefs were able to exert their influence and consolidate their power base.⁴¹¹ France noted that contact with Europeans benefited those chiefdoms that were already in positions of power, hence “powerful leaders attracted white men to support them which further consolidated their influence.”⁴¹² In 1840, Rev John Hunt wrote that the three leading polities of Bau, Rewa and Cakaudrove had obtained their superiority over the rest of “Feejee” [sic] by means of access to European weapons and the skilled military assistance of Europeans themselves.⁴¹³ This was evident in the emergence of Bau as a leading polity due to early acquisition of both firearms and Europeans who knew how to use them.⁴¹⁴ Ratu Naulivou as ‘*Vunivalu*’ (warlord) of Bau had adopted Charles Savage who was regarded as the Vunivalu’s “white man.”⁴¹⁵ Savage, a beachcomber who had taken muskets from his wrecked ship, used his technological skills with the new weapons to bring Bau into prominence, and introduced the “musket into the mainstream of political processes.”⁴¹⁶ Powerful chiefs attracted white men and exploited their skills in weaponry to consolidate their power and influence.

In a workshop panel on the “Perspectives and impact of military take-over (coup) of government in Fiji” in Suva in April 2007, a panellist had pointed to these historical factors that had introduced guns into the local scene in the 18th and 19th centuries, which had changed forever the nature of native warfare in Fiji,⁴¹⁷ and elevated chiefs like Cakobau

⁴¹¹ See Sayes, S.A. 1984. Changing paths of the land: Early Political Hierarchies in Cakaudrove, Fiji. *Journal of Pacific History* 19 (1), pp 4-5: Sayes notes that there is lack of reliable evidence that Cakaudrove benefited politically as a matanitu or hegemony from early contact with Europeans, compared to Bau. See also Routledge, 1985: pp 43-45;

⁴¹² France, 1969: 22, who argued that contact benefited those already in positions of power, ‘that powerful leaders attracted white men to support them and so consolidated their influence,’ as cited in Sayes, 1984:4;

⁴¹³ As cited in Sayes, S. 1984. The paths of the Land: early political hierarchies in Cakaudrove, Fiji. *Journal of Pacific History*, Vol.19 No.11, p.4

Sayes argues however that the role of firearms in pre-colonial Fiji’s political struggles was often exaggerated for example by missionary observers who assumed ethnocentrically that leading chiefdoms (matanitu) owed their paramountcy to more than equal access to the Europeans and their weapons.

⁴¹⁴ Sayes, (1984:4) cites France (1969:22) who argued that contact benefited those already in positions of power, ‘that powerful leaders attracted white men to support them and so consolidated their influence.’

⁴¹⁵ Donnelly, T., Quanchi, M. and G. J. Kerr. 1994. *Fiji in the Pacific*. Milton, Queensland: Jacaranda Wiley Ltd. Press, 4th Ed, p.18

⁴¹⁶ Routledge, p.46

⁴¹⁷ Fijian male in 60s, former MP and former school principal, in PCRC. 2007. *People’s Consultation Report on an Arms Trade Treaty*. April 18-19 2007, Suva: p. 14;

against their rivals.⁴¹⁸ He pointed out that the same power of the guns was being used by the Fiji military to overthrow democratic governments.⁴¹⁹

Routledge asserts that increased trade after the 1830s meant the “possession of a musket was an essential requisite of a properly equipped warrior,” which contributed a rather “volatile element” to the political processes.⁴²⁰ Other Europeans like sandalwood and bech-de-mer traders saw the value of muskets for trade, and chiefs would do anything to get these guns, even selling their lands.⁴²¹ Once their neighbours acquired weapons it became important to own one.⁴²² Ravuvu claims that the use of arms to settle conflicts and to enforce compliance has inflicted a long-term fear of the military among Fijians, by instilling a sense of “might is right” in the minds of the Fijians.⁴²³

It has even been suggested that before firearms were introduced, Fijian men were famous for their indomitable courage but that the skilful use of the musket had “dampened their ardour.”⁴²⁴ This seems to be an apt description of the men in the Fiji military today who have come to depend on the power of the guns as the key source of power to settle political disputes instead of using the power of reason and logic.

Christianity and Tongan Influence

Christian missionaries and the Tongan army played another crucial dimension of external influence on tribal warfare in the mid-19th century Fiji.⁴²⁵ The first missionaries to arrive in Fiji were two Tahitians named Hanea and Atai of the London Missionary Society (LMS), who set up a small group of converts on Oneata island in the Lau group, in 1830.⁴²⁶ In 1835, Wesleyan missionaries William Cross and David Cargill arrived in Fiji, accompanied by Tongan teachers and an emissary of the King of Tonga to ensure they were favourably

⁴¹⁸Fijian male in 60s, former MP and former school principal, in PCRC. 2007. People’s Consultation Report on an Arms Trade Treaty. April 18-19 2007, Suva: p. 14;

⁴¹⁹ *ibid*

⁴²⁰ Routledge, *ibid*, pp 43-44; 47: Routledge states in p.44: “A gun was one thing in the hands of the average Fijian warrior for whom it was as much a status symbol as anything, liable to be brandished as a club or used in some even less efficacious manner...[it] was quite another thing in the hands of a European beachcomber who did understand its use, was able to place himself in such a way as to have time to load and reload properly.” Clunie (quoted by Routledge, p.44) concluded that since the average Fijian warrior did not understand the workings of his weapon, he proved an indifferent marksman, in contrast to his expert use of traditional spears and clubs.

⁴²¹ Donnelly et.al p.18

⁴²² Donnelly et.al p.18

⁴²³ *Ibid*, p.34, 36-37

⁴²⁴ Clunie, 1977, p.11 cited J.D. MacDonald (1857:251).

⁴²⁵ Routledge, p.71

⁴²⁶ Donnelly et.al, p. 19

received.⁴²⁷ There was already a considerable Tongan presence in Fiji, and their association at the highest political levels included marriage and blood ties with prominent chiefly families. Together with Tongan warriors and canoe-builders, they greatly facilitated the pioneering work of the Wesleyan missionaries in Fiji.⁴²⁸ The arrival in 1844 of two Catholic Marist priests to “counter the evangelical effects of Protestantism,”⁴²⁹ was not as widely effective as that of the Wesleyan Methodists, which had gained legitimacy and reinforcement by its association with the ‘*Lotu*’⁴³⁰ Tonga (Tongan religion).

Cross and Cargill initially faced opposition to the new ‘*lotu*’ because it was inconsistent with the traditional way of life, while Fijian chiefs were highly suspicious of its potential threat to their authority and the loyalty of their subjects especially in times of war. In 1837 for example, the *Tui Nayau* (paramount chief of the Lau Group in eastern Fiji) criticised Christianity for “levelling distinctions of rank, sanctioning insubordination and producing poverty and famine.”⁴³¹ Ratu Cakobau also saw the potential risk from the European religion in undermining his authority and influence.⁴³²

The missionaries recognized that for any real progress to occur in the spread of their faith, it was necessary to convert the chiefs first.⁴³³ They focused therefore on a compromised policy of outward respect for traditional protocol and local custom by learning the language and customs first.⁴³⁴ Halapua observes that native Fijians became more accepting of the Wesleyan missionaries because of their respect for local customs and protocol.⁴³⁵ In their zeal to save souls, the pioneer missionaries transformed and eradicated the barbaric cultural practices of cannibalism, infanticide and widow strangling.⁴³⁶ The multi-skills of the missionaries, which included medical, education, technology, printing and linguistic know-how, laid the foundation for the credibility of Christian missions.⁴³⁷ Leading chiefs were

⁴²⁷ ⁴²⁷ Donnelly et.al, p.74

⁴²⁸ Halapua, 2003, p. 69; Routledge, 1985 p.73

⁴²⁹ Routledge, pp 73-74

⁴³⁰ Routledge, p.73; see also Halapua, 2003: p.70, who notes that ‘*lotu*’ is a Polynesian word that is associated with all the rites, relationships and activities associated with the worship of God. (My explanation: the word ‘*lotu*’ or religion is widely accepted and adopted as a Fijian word despite its Polynesian influence.

⁴³¹ Henderson, G. 1931. *Fiji and the Fijians 1835-1856*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson Ltd, Ch. VII, Mission work: 1835-1840, p. 112

⁴³² Routledge, p.74

⁴³³ Routledge, p.74

⁴³⁴ *ibid*

⁴³⁵ Halapua, 2003, p.70

⁴³⁶ *ibid*

⁴³⁷ *ibid*

pivotal in providing protection for the missionaries who established key mission centres.⁴³⁸ For Cakobau and leading chiefs, the foremost question was “to be or not to be a Christian,” fearing the loss of power and control.⁴³⁹

Eventually however Cakobau succumbed to the new *lotu* (Christianity), due rather to more compelling reasons that threatened his power and dominance.⁴⁴⁰

King George of Tonga had hinted that unless Cakobau converted, the Tongans might assist Rewa.⁴⁴¹ He urged Cakobau to ‘*lotu*’ and to be humble, “It will be well for you, Cakobau, to think wisely in these days.”⁴⁴² Faced with little choice, Cakobau accepted and converted to the new Christian religion on 30 April 1854, following which he married his principal wife Adi Samanunu, the daughter of the Roko Tui Bau.⁴⁴³ Cakobau’s conversion held significant implications in the final stages of political ‘vanua’ rivalries.⁴⁴⁴

A year later in April 1855, with the support of the missionaries and the Tongan warriors led by King George and Maafu, Bau defeated Rewa and the Bauan rebels in the Battle of Kaba, which firmly established the paramountcy of Bau in central Fiji.⁴⁴⁵ As Routledge argues, the battle of Kaba heralded a turning point in the historical development of Fiji:

marking the triumph of the new over the old religion, Christianity over heathenism and the beginning of a series of confrontations between the East and West, the coastal chiefdoms of the Eastern Fiji against the hill-tribes of the interior of Western Viti Levu.⁴⁴⁶

The resulting mass conversions was due not so much to a sudden feeling of faith, as of paying homage to an obviously stronger God.⁴⁴⁷ The Methodist church became firmly established in most parts of Fiji, and in keeping with traditional socialization, Methodism

⁴³⁸ These were established in Lakeba under the patronage of Tui Nayau, Burebasaga in Rewa under the Roko Tui Dreketi, Viwa, a key ally of Cakobau and Somosomo under Tui Cakau’s protection.

⁴³⁹ Ravuvu, 1991: p.4

⁴⁴⁰ Routledge, p. 83

⁴⁴¹ Routledge, p. 83

⁴⁴² Derrick, 1946, 1974: p. 111

⁴⁴³ Derrick, 1946, 1974: p. 111; On 11 January 1857, Ratu Cakobau and Adi Samanunu were publicly baptized taking the names Ratu Epenisa and Adi Litia.⁴⁴³ Suitable provisions were also made for other chiefly women in Cakobau’s household who were, Adi Qalirea an elder sister of Adi Samanunu, Adi Lalaciwa of Lakeba and Adi Uvu of Cakaudrove.

⁴⁴⁴ Routledge, p.83

⁴⁴⁵ Routledge, pp.86-87

⁴⁴⁶ Routledge, pp.86-87

⁴⁴⁷ Stanley Brown.1973. Men from Under the Sky: The arrival of Westerners in Fiji.

became grafted on to Fijian culture rather than displacing it.⁴⁴⁸ The Trinitarian structure of the *vanua* (people and land), *lotu* (church or religion) and the *Tui* or *Turaga* (King or chiefs) was incorporated into the practice and teaching of the church, which forged a closer association between the Methodist church, the chiefs and the *vanua*.⁴⁴⁹ Kaplan aptly observes that the Fijian war culture was challenged first by Christian missionaries and later by Christian-converted Tongan armies in the 40 years before Fiji was ceded to Great Britain.⁴⁵⁰ The power of Christianity thus brought to an end the inter-tribal and *vanua* rivalries among the leading polities in pre-colonial Fijian society.

Origin of Fiji Military: Cakobau's 'Royal Army' 1871

The Fiji military traces its origins to 1871 when an armed force, the 'Royal Army,' was raised to support the government of Ratu Cakobau, the titular head of the pre-colonial government.⁴⁵¹ A section of the white settlers on Levuka, site of Fiji's first capital, who were anxious to create a climate of stability for establishing a European-owned and managed plantation economy, exploited Cakobau's traditional status to gain legitimacy.⁴⁵² The Royal Army was an attempt to stamp the authority of the Cakobau government throughout Fiji which was perceived as lacking legitimacy.⁴⁵³ It comprised a thousand men under a British commander, with European officers and the general soldiery largely drawn from ethnic tribes loyal to Cakobau.⁴⁵⁴ Operations included providing security for the new Christian converts and mission stations through the pacification of rebellious hill tribes in the interior and western districts of the main island of Viti Levu.⁴⁵⁵ Prisoners taken in these pacification operations were sold off as plantation labour by the Cakobau government to supplement the 'black-birder' labour on European owned and managed plantations.⁴⁵⁶

The early operations of the 'Royal Army' marked the beginning of Fiji's exposure to modern military organization and shaped the historical role of the military in supporting the

⁴⁴⁸ Tavola, 1991, p.9

⁴⁴⁹ Halapua, 2003, p. 72

⁴⁵⁰ Kaplan, 1988, p.353

⁴⁵¹ Sanday J. 1991. The Politicization of Military Professionalism in Fiji, p.241, in Selochan, V. 1991. The Military, the State and Development in Asia and the Pacific. Boulder, USA: Westview Press, Inc., pp239-270;

⁴⁵² *ibid*

⁴⁵³ *ibid*

⁴⁵⁴ Sanday, 1991: p.241

⁴⁵⁵ Sanday, 1991: p.241

⁴⁵⁶ *ibid*

authority and interests of the Fijian chiefly establishment, as well as defending state structures to support a capitalist economy.⁴⁵⁷

Melanesian Blackbirding: 1860s

Prior to the arrival of Indian indentured labourers in 1879, Melanesian ‘black-birders’ from the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea were already working in European-owned plantations in various parts of Fiji since 1863.⁴⁵⁸

Blackbirding’ was a form of slavery trade in the Pacific that involved the importation (by dubious means according to descendants) of Melanesians between 1863 and the early 1900s.⁴⁵⁹ The trade had provided the necessary labour for Fiji’s economic development in European-owned plantation economies such as cotton and sugar cane, while some had even provided “small fierce armies” in the absence of strong government protection before 1870.⁴⁶⁰ Melanesian descendants in Fiji currently remain among the most disadvantaged communities despite intermarriage with indigenous men and women.⁴⁶¹

III. COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL INFLUENCES

Cession of Fiji 1874

Fiji was ceded to Great Britain by the leading chiefs on 10 October, 1874. In the lead up to Fiji’s cession to Great Britain, a message from the Council of Chiefs announced: “We give Fiji unreservedly to the Queen of Britain... that she may rule us justly and affectionately, and that we may live in peace and prosperity.”⁴⁶² As the solemn ceremony ended with the signing of the Deed of Cession in Nasova, Levuka, Fiji’s then capital, the Chief Secretary Thurston addressed the Queen’s representative Sir Hercules Robinson:

Before finally ceding his country to Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain...the King desires...to give Her Majesty the only thing he possesses...his old and favourite war club, the former and until lately, the only known law of Fiji. In abandoning club law and adopting the forms and principles of civilised

⁴⁵⁷ Sanday, 1991., p.242; see also Halapua, 2003, p.46;

⁴⁵⁸ Fiji Melanesian Development Association submission to the 2012 Constitution Commission, Suva, 13/10/2012: p. 1;

⁴⁵⁹ Fiji Melanesian Community Development Association (FMCDA) submission to the Fiji Constitutional Review Process, 13/10/2012: pp1-2.

⁴⁶⁰ *ibid*

⁴⁶¹ *ibid*

⁴⁶² Derrick, R.A. 1946. A History of Fiji, Vol.1. Suva: Government Press, p. 248

societies he laid by his old weapon and covered it with the emblems of peace.⁴⁶³

By surrendering his war club and what it symbolised, King Cakobau and the chiefs pledged themselves and their descendants under the law of civilised societies, a commitment that was continuously challenged by four military coups in post-independent Fiji.

One of the problems facing Fiji's first Governor Sir Arthur Gordon at Cession, was how to develop a sustainable economy as part of the British Empire.⁴⁶⁴ While there was potential to develop crops especially cotton, copra and sugarcane, these required large volumes of labour.⁴⁶⁵ Gordon was reluctant to use Fijian labour for fear of breaking up their communal way of life, while the Melanesian black-birding labour trade that began in the 1860s was on the wane due to increased controls.⁴⁶⁶

Indentured (Girmitiya) Labour Recruitment from India: 1879-1916

Barely five years after Cession, the colonial government embarked on a massive labour recruitment from the Indian sub-continent, "to provide a cheap and dependable labour supply to European-owned plantations."⁴⁶⁷ Between 1879 and 1916, over 60,000 indentured labourers were brought to Fiji from India on five-year contracts, with 45,000 from Northern India including 13,696 (30 percent) females, and the rest from the south.⁴⁶⁸ Based on a peculiar British opinion that the presence of women would improve life for the indentured men, the government of India ruled that a minimum of 40 women should accompany every 100 indentured men.⁴⁶⁹ Such a disproportionate ratio imposed unnecessary sexual demands on the women who were vulnerable to sexual abuse from European plantation managers or overseers and Indian *sirdars*.⁴⁷⁰

The labourers referred to the contract as '*girmit*' (from the English word 'agreement') and called themselves '*girmitiyas*' or the 'agreement' people.⁴⁷¹ At the end of their initial 5-

⁴⁶³ Derrick, 1946: p. 249;

⁴⁶⁴ Donnelly et al., p. 48; Sanday, 1991, p.243

⁴⁶⁵ Donnelly, et.al., p. 48

⁴⁶⁶ *ibid*

⁴⁶⁷ Lal, Brij V. 1985. Kunti's Cry: Indentured women on Fiji plantations. *The Indian Economic Social History Review*, Vol. 22 (1), p. 57

⁴⁶⁸ Lal, Brij V. 1985. Kunti's Cry: Indentured women on Fiji plantations. *The Indian Economic Social History Review*, Vol. 22 (1), p.57;

⁴⁶⁹ Luker, V. 2005. A Tale of Two Mothers: Colonial Construction of Indian and Fijian Maternity, *Fijian Studies* Vol.3, No. 2, p. 361; see also Lal, 1985, p.57;

⁴⁷⁰ Luker, 2005, p.360

⁴⁷¹ Lal, 1995, p.57; Kelly, 1992, p.252

year contract, the labourers were offered three options: to return home at their own expense; a free passage home for them and their children if they remained for another five years, or the option to remain in Fiji.⁴⁷²

Indians from diverse backgrounds came to Fiji for various reasons including poverty and the promise of a fresh start.⁴⁷³ While many women had migrated as individuals, about 4,341 women, or 36 per cent of the female population arrived as married women and members of nuclear or extended families.⁴⁷⁴ The rest were single women and widows, while some young women left their homes under a cloud and hoped to avoid the stigma by coming to Fiji.⁴⁷⁵ Women migrated to escape from domestic quarrels or oppressive cultural rituals and practices such as the dowry system,⁴⁷⁶ while a few arrived as daughters of immigrant parents.⁴⁷⁷

Deception seemed to have been a major factor in destination Fiji, and women were being lured or kidnapped by unscrupulous recruiters (known as *arkati* in Hindi) who promised abundant food and pleasant working conditions.⁴⁷⁸ Upon arrival, women were assigned to separate groups in the fields, yet did the same kind of work required of men: “they cut grass and planted cane,” and “during the busy seasons, they helped in harvesting and loading trucks.”⁴⁷⁹ Women also faced the same punishment as men,⁴⁸⁰ for example when a woman failed to turn up to work, “she was given the task of weeding twenty chains of grass.”⁴⁸¹

Similar to certain conditions of slavery, the indenture system was hostile to women who were viewed by planters as inferior workers.⁴⁸² ‘Girmitiya’ women suffered extreme hardship in terms of their labour and stereotypical attitudes towards their sexual and

⁴⁷² Norton, R. 1990. *Race and Politics in Fiji*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, Revised Edition, p.22; see also Luker, V. *A tale of Two Mothers: Colonial constructions of Indian and Fijian Maternity*. *The Journal of Fijian Studies*, Vol 3, No. 2, p. 360;

⁴⁷³ Lal, 1995, p.57; Naidu, V. 1981. *The Violence of Indenture in Fiji*. Suva: World University Service, pp 19-23 as cited in Mishra, 2012: p.57

⁴⁷⁴ Lal, 1985, p.57

⁴⁷⁵ Cited in Nicole, 2006: p.342;

⁴⁷⁶ Lal, 1985, p.57; Naidu, V. 1981. *The Violence of Indenture in Fiji*. Suva: World University Service, pp 19-23 as cited in Mishra, p.57

⁴⁷⁷ Cited in Nicole, 2006: p. 342;

⁴⁷⁸ Mishra, M. 2012. *Between Women: Indenture, Morality and Health*. *Australian Humanities Review*, Issue 52, p.57;

⁴⁷⁹ Nicole, 2006: p.343;

⁴⁸⁰ *ibid*

⁴⁸¹ cited in Nicole, p. 364;

⁴⁸² Jolly, M. 1987. *The Forgotten Women: A History of Migrant Labour and Gender relations in Vanuatu*. *Oceania* 58 (2): pp 122-3; as cited in Luker, 2005, p. 361;

reproductive circumstances.⁴⁸³ As wage earners, mothers and wives, they were subjected to poor living conditions, physical and sexual violence, long hours of work, wage cuts for low attendance during sickness or pregnancy,⁴⁸⁴ while childbirth was considered an economic cost.⁴⁸⁵

It was hardly surprising that such degrading circumstances triggered off a series of militant resistance that sometimes turned into “vocal, public and violent contestations led by indentured women.”⁴⁸⁶ Between the late 1890s to early 1900s, the women had established an Indian Women’s Committee, a forum to collectively challenge their multiple oppressions.⁴⁸⁷ The most common form of resistance involved work-gangs of women physically confronting and beating up men who sexually violated indentured women, including pinning down their European overseers, immobilizing them and taking turns urinating on them.⁴⁸⁸ Indentured women consciously employed the same tactics of gender-based violence (GBV), humiliation and degradation that they were subjected to.⁴⁸⁹

The sexual exploitation of indentured women in Fiji is best illustrated in the tale of Kunti, a married woman who was subjected to improper sexual advances by a European overseer. She escaped by jumping into a river possibly to commit suicide, but was saved by a passing Indian boy.⁴⁹⁰ Kunti’s story was published in the press in India in 1913, which mobilized an “unprecedented campaign and agitation against the indentured system.”⁴⁹¹ Outrage over the sexual abuse of Indian women in Fiji became the rallying point for the anti-indenture campaign in India in the 1910s.⁴⁹² To avoid political embarrassment and to diffuse a potentially explosive issue, the Government of India attempted to expose the story of Kunti as false,⁴⁹³ by portraying Kunti in a derogatory stereotype of Indian female plantation workers as a woman of loose character and a prostitute.⁴⁹⁴ However, the story of Kunti also

⁴⁸³ Luker, p.362

⁴⁸⁴ Lal, 1995, p.57; Mishra, 2012, p.1; Luker, 2005, p.361

⁴⁸⁵ Luker, p.360

⁴⁸⁶ Mishra, 2012: p.58

⁴⁸⁷ Mishra, M. 2008. The Emergence of Feminism in Fiji. *Women’s History Review*, 17 (1) p 39 (see pp 39-56);

⁴⁸⁸ cited in Mishra, p.58; Kelly, 1992, p.259

⁴⁸⁹ Mishra, p.58

⁴⁹⁰ Lal, 1985: p.55; Luker, p.362

⁴⁹¹ Lal, 1985: p.56; Luker, p.363

⁴⁹² Kelly, J. 1992. Fiji Indians and “Commoditization of Labour.” *American Ethnologist: Journal of American Ethnological Society*. Vol. 19 (1): p. 260

⁴⁹³ cited in Lal, 1985: p.56

⁴⁹⁴ Luker, 2005, p.363; Lal, 1985: pp.55-58;

became a symbol of resistance against British domination,⁴⁹⁵ economic oppression, colonialism and patriarchy.⁴⁹⁶ The story of courage, resistance and resilience of indentured women helped pave the way for the abolishment of an evil, oppressive patriarchal system which served as an inspiration to the modern-day Fiji women's movement.

The apparent evils of the indenture system attracted wide public opinion and demands for the Indian government to abolish the system.⁴⁹⁷ The 1915 'Andrews and Pearson' report to investigate the indentured conditions in Fiji, illustrated the social evils of the system.⁴⁹⁸ Following growing agitation in India⁴⁹⁹ and the Australasian women's support for indentured women's protests against physical, sexual and economic exploitation in the cane belts,⁵⁰⁰ the government of India was forced to terminate the indenture system by 1919.⁵⁰¹

Institutionalization of 'Race' and 'Racial Difference' in Colonial Fiji

The choice by the majority of indentured labourers to remain in Fiji at the end of their contract significantly altered the course of history in the young colony.⁵⁰² Kelly notes that British officials took steps from the early days to establish and maintain categories of "difference" between people in Fiji.⁵⁰³ Prior to cession, missionaries used religion to distinguish between Christian and heathen, and following the arrival of indentured labourers, Islam and Hinduism were added.⁵⁰⁴ Fanon insists however that upon closer examination of the colonial context, what distinguished "difference" in the world was the

⁴⁹⁵ Kelly, J. 1991. *A Politics of Virtue: Hinduism, Sexuality and Counter-colonial Discourse in Fiji*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press;

⁴⁹⁶ Mishra, 2012, p.59

⁴⁹⁷ Nicole, 2006: p. 365, notes that momentum was provided by the Nationalist movement in India and anti-indenture lobby was led by C.F. Andrews and Mahatma Gandhi's colleague, Mrs Sarojini Naidu. Between 1914 and 1920 when indenture finally ended, Gillian (1962: 182-3), and Kelly (1991:62) both argue that the abolition of the indenture system formed a significant part of the rise of nationalism in India.

⁴⁹⁸ Donnelly et.al, p 51.

⁴⁹⁹ Brij Lal, 1985. *Kunti's Cry: Indentured women on Fiji plantations*, p. 56

⁵⁰⁰ Mishra, Margaret. 2012. *Between Women: Indenture, Morality and Health*. Australian Humanities Review, Issue 52: p1

⁵⁰¹ Kelly, J. 1995. 'Threats to Difference in Colonial Fiji.' *Cultural Anthropology*, 10 (1): pp 76; see also Ferguson, J and A. Gupta (eds.) 1992. *Space, identity and the politics of difference*. *Cultural Anthropology* 7 (1): 3-20;

⁵⁰² Donnelly et.al, 1994, p.48

⁵⁰³ Ibid, p.64

⁵⁰⁴ Kelly, 1995, p.65

“fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race,” so that “race” became “the colonizers’ dominant principle for making and ordering difference.”⁵⁰⁵

The arrival of Indian labourers in Fiji within five years of cession, marked the main categories of “difference” in Fiji as race-based which was manifested in custom, culture, and the level of civilization, and “race” even became mixed with distinctions of ‘religion’ such as Hinduism and Islam for Indians and Christianity for Fijians, in order to define and maintain these social categories.⁵⁰⁶ The three main “races” in Fiji after cession were Fijians, Europeans and Indians, and each ‘race’ had sub-groups such as Punjabis, Gujaratis, (Indians), Bauans or *Kai Colo* (Fijians), planters or traders (Europeans).⁵⁰⁷

Kelly notes that racial identities and dominant masculinities in colonial Fiji stereotyped the “races” as the “ruling Europeans,” the “savage vulnerable Fijians” and the “labouring coolie Indians,”⁵⁰⁸ which produced lasting conditions in which indigenous Fijians owned the land inalienably while Indians dominated the sugar industry and economy, and ‘race’ competed with ‘class’ as a mobilizing force.⁵⁰⁹

The institutionalising of “race” discouraged any interaction between Indians and Fijians so that Fijian officials were instructed not to shelter runaway Indian “coolies”⁵¹⁰ in Fijian villages. Despite official attempts of racial segregation, there are records of early attempts towards inter-racial integration. As early as 1912 for example, a former indentured labourer by the name of Jiale Taragi had married a Fijian woman in Ra province and applied to the ‘Buli’ (native administrator) to be treated as a “native” since he was already paying tax and performing community duties.⁵¹¹ The colonial secretary feared that acceding to the request,

...would be creating or recognizing an undesirable precedent and opening the doors to Indians securing by marriage with Fijians, the use of native land

⁵⁰⁵ Fanon, Frantz. 1968. *Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, as cited in Kelly, 1995: p. 70;

⁵⁰⁶ Kelly, 1995: p. 65

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p.71

⁵⁰⁸ Kelly, 1992, p.248; The term “coolie was used by colonists to refer to Indians who worked on the sugar plantations and lived in ‘coolie’ lines;

⁵⁰⁹ Kelly, 1992, p.248

⁵¹⁰ Kelly, 1995, p.65; see also Kelly, 1992: p.248;

⁵¹¹ The story is cited in Kelly, 1995: p.65 and details of this case are contained in the Colonial Secretary’s Office minute paper CSR 3657/12, available at the National Archives in Fiji.

without paying rent. Would his children have the right to be registered as member of the *mataqali*?

Not surprisingly, the request was rejected and the Executive Council advised that “it was not competent for the Governor in Council to sanction the formal recognition of an Indian as a Fijian.”⁵¹²

Fijian and Melanesian workers who were hired as black-birders in plantation labour were housed separately and worked under different contractual arrangements from indentured labourers.⁵¹³ Kelly asserts that the gaps between plantations and the Fijian villages were real, and they were maintained to uphold this turn to “race” as the orienting conception for the practice of “difference” in colonial Fiji.⁵¹⁴ A descendant of indentured labourers, Sashi Kiran recently stated that for almost 100 years, indentured labourers were discouraged by law to enter Fijian villages, and punishment was meted out against offenders, which meant that the majority of people of Indian origin have never stepped in a Fijian village, let alone a Fijian home.⁵¹⁵

The case of Jiale Taragi highlighted a missed opportunity for racial integration which could have paved steps towards more progressive racial understanding by the colonial administration. For Taragi, the politics of “race” intersected with his gender to deny him the opportunity to live as a Fijian, since he was no longer an indentured labourer but had settled in his wife’s village, thereby raising the concern of European officials that granting his request would create a precedent where his children would have access to their mother’s *mataqali* land. Had his Fijian wife decided then to register their children under her *mataqali*, it could have set a progressive precedent for Fijian women marrying non-*mataqali* members, let alone an Indian.

Fijian ‘Protectionist’ Policy

Following his arrival in Fiji in 1875, the first Governor Sir Arthur Gordon, (later Lord Stanmore) moved quickly to establish a colonial policy aimed at protecting the interests of the native Fijian population, whose land and labour were being alienated by unscrupulous

⁵¹² Kelly, 1995, p.65;

⁵¹³ Ibid

⁵¹⁴ Ibid, p.66

⁵¹⁵ Kiran, Sashi. 2016. ‘For peace which is true,’ in Fiji Times 29/09/2016, in <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=372628>

sections of the white settler community.⁵¹⁶ He forbade further sales of Fijian land and established a uniform system of local government and land tenure based on traditional precedents.⁵¹⁷ This was contrary to Kelly's assertion that in other colonies, the colonial government was created primarily to govern and protect European settlers, markets and interests.⁵¹⁸ Kaplan notes that Gordon's sense of the evolutionary stage of Fijians and his benevolent intentions toward them stifled the hopes of European planters who had looked forward to more land and cheap labour.⁵¹⁹ Gordon noted in his description of the Fijians:

On the whole, I class them in this present condition with the 'Horas' of Madagascar...Like them the Fijians all profess an at least nominal allegiance to Christianity, and that it has largely influenced the life and character of the great masses of the population. It should always be borne in mind that the present state of society for which they are intended is not that of England in the present day, but more nearly resembles that of the Highlands of Scotland some three or four hundred years ago...⁵²⁰

Kelly asserts that the parallels of Fijian present and British past seemed to suggest that "level of civilization" was the determining characteristic and that such levels were changeable.⁵²¹ Gordon at least recognised the "evolutionary" stage of civilization for Fijians at that point of integration into the world economy. The opposing view holds that Fijian progress would have quickly advanced once they were introduced to a modern cash-based livelihood earlier instead of maintaining their subsistence communal living for a long time.⁵²² Gordon's views persisted however and he quickly instituted a less than benevolent system of indentured labour, which despite his well-meaning intentions for the indigenous race, resulted in a much more historically complex situation.⁵²³

Various perspectives were expressed by men and women I had 'talanoa' with regarding the implications of Gordon's 'protectionist' policy towards indigenous Fijians. An ethnic

⁵¹⁶ Sanday, J. 1989. *The Military in Fiji: Historical development and Future role*. Canberra: ANU, p.5

⁵¹⁷ Crocombe, R. 1972. Review of 'The Charter of the Land: Custom and Colonization in Fiji' by Peter France. 1969. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, in *Oceania*, Vol. 42, No.3 (March 1972), pp 242.

⁵¹⁸ Kelly, 1992, p.248

⁵¹⁹ Kaplan, 1989, p.354

⁵²⁰ Sir Arthur Gordon, (Fiji's first governor) in an address to the Royal Colonial Institute in 1879, as cited in Kelly, 1995, p.72

⁵²¹ Kelly, 1995, pp. 71-72

⁵²² Kelly, 1995, pp. 71-72

⁵²³ Kelly, 1995: p.65

Fijian woman had speculated for example, that Fijians would have been sold out socially and politically a century ago, had it not been for Gordon's protectionist policy.⁵²⁴ She admitted that even though the first coup in 1987 was illegal, "at least it restored a sense of indigenous consciousness" that would have already been lost as calls for equality by Indian immigrants since the early 20th century,⁵²⁵ had gotten louder and allowed. She believes that 'equality' needs to be balanced between the rights of "indigenous people" to their God-given land and the "citizenship" rights of everyone else in Fiji.⁵²⁶

Fiji's statesman and chief Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna's address to the Legislative Council in 1946 may help throw some light on the racial conception of 'equality' in the context of colonial Fiji:

As for the European, he is continuously thinking of democracy and... often feels that everybody should adopt democracy whether fitted for it or not. But he has tolerance. ...Then there is the Indian outlook. The Indian wants equality; he wants us to be equal, to attend the same schools, to eat in the same houses... Further, he is continuously on the lookout for racial discrimination. He thinks that everybody in this world was born on an equal footing and whether he comes from the Arctic Pole or from the Equator, or speaks Russian or Hindi, we should all be able to sit down as brothers and eat and sleep and drink together. As for the Fijian, well he would like to thrust *malua* [procrastination] on everyone. He would like to say, 'Wait with this confounded plan of yours...the time is not ripe; wait till we are ready, then we will consider your scheme.'...⁵²⁷

Ratu Sukuna's racial outlook still holds relevance today more than 70 years later, particularly in the context of Fiji's inter-racial relations, as it reflects the need for leaders to understand the links between "equality" and the stage or level of civilization of each racial group at the time.⁵²⁸ A former teacher colleague had also made a point on the fallacy of

⁵²⁴ Personal conversation with Fijian female in late 60s, former high school teacher and tertiary Lecturer, who was quite familiar with Gordon's policy having taught History at high school, October 2008;

⁵²⁵ Personal conversation with Fijian female in late 60s, former high school teacher, who was quite familiar with Gordon's policy having taught History at high school, October 2008;

⁵²⁶ *ibid*

⁵²⁷ Scarr Deryck (ed.) 1983. *Fiji: the three-legged stool- selected writings of Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna*. London: Macmillan Education. Ratu Sukuna's speech in the Legislative Council on the Education Plan, 20 November, 1946: p 402;

⁵²⁸ Kelly, 1995, pp. 71-72

comparing Fijians with Indians for example in education, since they are at different levels of civilization or development. She stated, "*O ira qo na kawa ni tamata makawa, e sega ni dodonu me da mai vakatautauvatataki tiko ni o keda eda se gone sara,*" (These people (Indians) come from an ancient civilization that has evolved over a long time, so as a young race, Fijians should not be compared with them).⁵²⁹ A part-European male NGO colleague had also pointed out that "Fijians have been forced to fast-track their mindset and way of life in order to keep up with the more advanced races in Fiji".⁵³⁰

Ratu Sukuna himself had insisted that if a comparison in achievement had to be made then it should be made with people who match Fijian's stage of development such as "the Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tonga or New Caledonia (Kanaky), which would show that Fijians are capable of development along its own lines."⁵³¹ In response to a motion by an Indian member in the Legislative Council comparing Fijians to Indians, Ratu Sukuna had stated:

Analysing his speech...consisted of two false inferences. His formula was 'democracy is good for India, therefore democracy must be good for Fiji', which means that he considers India with its thousands of years of civilisation the equal of Fiji- an absurdity! The second formula was this, 'democratic institutions are good for England, therefore they must be good for Fiji'...We know Sir, that it has taken her [England] thousands of years to reach a certain type of civilisation, and this the Hon. Member wants to thrust on the Fijians, indifferent as to whether they are fitted for it or not.⁵³²

Indeed, the lack of time and space for Fijians to develop and appreciate the modern institutions of democracy was exacerbated by the lack of appreciation by Indian leaders on the different levels of civilisation of each racial group at the time, since as Ratu Sukuna asserted, Indian leaders were too caught up comparing themselves with Europeans and Fijians and constantly on the look-out for racial discrimination.⁵³³ These same attitudes still prevail among many Indo-Fijian leaders and commentators in Fiji today.

⁵²⁹ Fijian female, former school teacher in her 50s, in personal conversation in Suva, 9/12/2012;

⁵³⁰ Part European male (with Fijian mother and Part-European father) in his 30s in personal conversation in Suva, 9/4/2009;

⁵³¹ Scarr, 1983: p.312;

⁵³² Scarr: 1983: p.179;

⁵³³ Ibid, p. 402;

Ratu Sukuna himself had recognised that if Fijians were to advance in the modern context, they had to change their way of life. He had popularized the phrase, “*vakusakusa vakamalua*” (make haste slowly) in response to calls for equality by Indian leaders:

Now some of us regard equality as a sacred thing that should be bestowed on all communities—social equality, equality of opportunity, equality before the law. So, do I, but all in good time, when every community has acquired the necessary elements that go to make equality a good.⁵³⁴

Ratu Sukuna understood that Fijians needed the necessary mental and cultural preparations to be able to meet the demands of a global economy and to keep up with the more advanced (mentally and technologically) races that had settled in Fiji. The colonial policy of racial segregation however, had discouraged early opportunities for racial integration that could have fostered greater understanding and tolerance among the different races.⁵³⁵

The Myth of Fijian ‘Homogeneity’

The coups have been perceived as a symptom of fragmentation and disunity among Fijians contending for power, rather than a mobilizing force for Fijian unity.⁵³⁶ With its roots in the colonial era, the ‘myth of homogeneity,’ as alluded to by Routledge⁵³⁷ and Durutalo, presumes that indigenous Fijians belong to a homogeneous cultural reality with uniform chiefly rule among the different ‘*vanua*’ or polities throughout Fiji.⁵³⁸ The premise that societies, cultures or communities exist naturally or generally in homogeneous, territorially bound units has been seriously called into doubt.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁴ Donnelly et.al., 1994, p.43

⁵³⁵ On the subject of Fijian experience of possessing the land, I was reminded of Stephen Covey’s highly acclaimed book, the 7 habits of highly effective people (see Covey, Stephen R. 1989. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful lessons in Personal Change*. New York: Fireside, pp. 38-39). The author describes a violation of the principle of sharing and possessing when his 3-year old daughter refused to let the other children play with her presents at her birthday party. After going through a series of persuasions ranging from a simple request, to a little reasoning,

⁵³⁶ Two women interviewees strongly shared this view: Female Fijian interviewee in mid-50s, professional legal background and former Fiji civil servant, Auckland: April 2014; Fijian female interviewee, former school teacher, 40s, NGO leader, Suva: Dec. 2012;

⁵³⁷ Routledge, 1985, p.220

⁵³⁸ Durutalo, A. 2000. Elections and the dilemma of indigenous Fijian political unity, in Brij V.Lal. 2000. *Fiji Before the Storm: Elections and the Politics of development*. Canberra: Asia-Pacific Press, ANU: p.73

⁵³⁹ Kelly, 1995, p.64, citing Ferguson, J and Gupta, A. (eds). 1992. *Space, identity and the politics of difference*. *Cultural Anthropology*, 7(1):3-20; see also Benedict Anderson. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso;

The notion of Fijian political unity was a social construction of the colonial administration, based on what Governor Gordon claimed to be Fijian custom and tradition.⁵⁴⁰ Gordon had set up councils in the districts and provinces in 1876, including a Council of Chiefs which represented the whole colony.⁵⁴¹ Sanday notes that Gordon had adapted the highly structured social order prevailing in the 'Polynesian-influenced' eastern maritime provinces where social units were vertically integrated under the leadership of hierarchical chiefly dynasties.⁵⁴² It was perceived as "tribal administration on indigenous lines," which in practice created a second tier of administration at provincial and village level, under the authority of chiefs.⁵⁴³ This paternalistic system of indirect rule incorporated chiefs as provincial officials and stipendiary magistrates, and designated Fijians as district officials and village headmen,⁵⁴⁴ blending in the old and new systems of leadership under the authority of chiefs.⁵⁴⁵

Ghai claims that the 'Fijian administration' became an important additional source of power and patronage for the chiefs, and employment for many commoners.⁵⁴⁶ Durutalo also affirms that indirect rule imposed a 'clientelism' leadership style where chiefs served both as traditional and state chiefs.⁵⁴⁷ Perhaps the most important legacy of the British policy of indirect rule was the establishment of a concept of political legitimacy founded on the belief that political leadership was the exclusive preserve of 'Fijian chiefs,' in which as Sanday claims, "the legitimacy and strength of one type of Fijian leadership, that of the Polynesian-influenced eastern dynastic chiefly class, was suitably altered for the purpose of colonial administration."⁵⁴⁸ Members of this dynastic chiefly class were to dominate the mantle of leadership in Fiji's transition from a crown colony to an independent nation.

Pre-colonial Fiji was therefore marked by differences between the Polynesian-influenced chiefdoms of the east, the tribal-based districts of the west and land tenure and kinship patterns of the coastal maritime polities. The use of social groupings as the basis for indirect

⁵⁴⁰ Durutalo, 2000, p.73

⁵⁴¹ Donnelly et.al. p.41

⁵⁴² Sanday, J. 1991, p. 242

⁵⁴³ Mayhew, A. 1938. *Education in the Colonial Empire*. London: Longmans, Green and Co, p.50; cited in Tavola, p.10

⁵⁴⁴ Kaplan, 1989: p.354

⁵⁴⁵ Durutalo, 1997, pp 66-7;

⁵⁴⁶ Ghai, Yash. 1987. 'The Fijian Crisis: The Constitutional dimension' in Tinker, et.al., Fiji, p. 10, as cited by Tavola, 1992: p.10

⁵⁴⁷ Durutalo, 1997, p.73

⁵⁴⁸ Sanday, J. 1991. *The Politicization of Military Professionalism in Fiji*, in Viberto, S. (ed). *The Military, the State and Development in Asia and the Pacific*. Boulder: Westview Press: pp 242-243;

rule was flawed, as it was based on inaccurate assumptions about non-industrial societies generally, and an incomplete knowledge of the customs of one particular area of Fiji, the chiefly dynasty of Bau, whose dialect was promoted by the missionaries and colonial officials as the medium of communication throughout Fiji.⁵⁴⁹

The hill tribes of interior Viti Levu were less hierarchical than the Polynesian-influenced eastern coastal chiefdoms and were considered too factionalized to be ruled by local Fijians.⁵⁵⁰ They were subjugated through armed expeditions in 1876, and the Governor appointed European resident commissioners in the inland provinces while Fijians served as district and village officials.⁵⁵¹

Leading chiefs also exploited the '*vasu*' relationship to build strong alliances and to extend their power base and spheres of influence.⁵⁵² The '*vasu*' relationship relates to a woman's son (and to a lesser extent, her daughter), who holds a particular claim on his uncle's (mother's brother's) counsel, loyalty, assistance, even property and all that belongs to him.⁵⁵³ The higher the mother's status, the greater the privileges of the '*vasu*' in relation to his mother's clan.

Role of the Fiji Military in Colonial era

In 1876, Cakobau's old military unit the 'Royal Army' was renamed the 'Armed Native Constabulary' (ANC) with 2,000 Fijian men under British officers.⁵⁵⁴ The ANC continued with 'pacification' operations in western and interior Viti Levu and Seaqaqa on Vanua Levu in the 1890s, until it was disbanded and amalgamated with the Fiji Constabulary (Police) in 1905.⁵⁵⁵ As the coercive arm of the state, the colonial military was responsible for the maintenance of internal stability that was necessary for the development of a capitalist economy. They assisted police and civil authorities to maintain and restore law and order and to train for homeland defence where resources permit.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁴⁹ Durutalo, 2000: p. 242; see also France, 1969, Chapter 1.

⁵⁵⁰ Kaplan, 1989, p.354

⁵⁵¹ Kaplan, 1989, p.354

⁵⁵² Sahlins, 2004, p.xi defines *vasu* as sacred uterine nephew.

⁵⁵³ Routledge, 1985, p.36

⁵⁵⁴ Ratuva, S. 2011. The Military Coups in Fiji: Reactive and Transformative Tendencies, in Asian Journal of Political Science, Vol 19, No.1, p. 99

⁵⁵⁵ Ratuva, S. 2011. The Military Coups in Fiji: Reactive and Transformative Tendencies, in Asian Journal of Political Science, Vol 19, No.1, p. 99; see also Sanday, J. 1991, p.242, 269;

⁵⁵⁶ Sanday, 1991: p.244

The Fiji Defence Force (FDF) formed during the First World War (1914 and 1918) was the first opportunity for Fiji troops to travel abroad and serve as labour corps volunteers in Italy and France.⁵⁵⁷ Indians had refused to join the war effort in protest against pay disparity with European officers.⁵⁵⁸ Sanday notes that the ethnic composition of the military in colonial era reflected the class structure of Fijian society, which was heavily influenced by the colonial government's assessment of the suitability of the main ethnic communities for martial duties.⁵⁵⁹ 'Suitability' was based on the ethnic group's political reliability and allegiance to those in control of government and in colonial Fiji.⁵⁶⁰ The order of assessed suitability for martial duty by ethnicity, placed Europeans at the top, then part-Europeans, followed by ethnic Fijians and Indo-Fijians last.⁵⁶¹ Europeans dominated the commissioned ranks in the military but after the 1920s, selected Fijian chiefs with leadership ability were granted army commissions. Below that was the rank and file of mostly European Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs), while part-Europeans and ethnic Fijians dominated the lower ranks of enlisted personnel.⁵⁶²

The relative absence of Indians in the military historically, was due to a variety of reasons. Having protested against pay discrepancies between European officers and non-Europeans, the colonial government considered that Indians could not be relied upon for military service, as they would not likely give their total loyalty to the war cause.⁵⁶³ When the second World War broke out, Indians again refused to enlist because they perceived it as an imperialist war that aimed to preserve the status quo for the British empire, particularly at a time when Mother India wanted the British colonisers out.⁵⁶⁴

Throughout Fiji's colonial history, troops had been called upon to defend the colonial order. Towards the end of the indentured system, the Colonial Sugar Refining (CSR) Company which had almost full control of the sugar industry, was faced with a shortage of labour and had to change its land policy.⁵⁶⁵ The company sub-divided its land into farm holdings which was leased out to cane farmers who then sold their cane to the mills.⁵⁶⁶ Between 1920 and

⁵⁵⁷ Sanday, 1991, p.269; Ratuva, 2011, p.100

⁵⁵⁸ *ibid*; Sanday, 1991, p.269

⁵⁵⁹ Sanday, 1991, p.269

⁵⁶⁰ Sanday, 1989, p.7

⁵⁶¹ *ibid*

⁵⁶² Sanday, 1989, p.7

⁵⁶³ Sanday, 1988;

⁵⁶⁴ Scobbel, 1994: p.188;

⁵⁶⁵ Donnelly, et.al., 1994, p.51

⁵⁶⁶ Donnelly, et.al., 1994, p.51

1921 a series of strikes occurred on the cane belts in protest against poor working conditions and rising food prices following CSR refusal to raise wages.⁵⁶⁷ To maintain the interests of the plantation economy, 300 ethnic Fijian policemen and special constables were deployed in the Suva-Nausori areas to restore order against what became perceived as “Indian” strikes.⁵⁶⁸ The use of ethnic ‘Fijian’ troops to quell ‘Indian’ strikes were far reaching, not only in terms of race relations, but also towards the perception of the military as a Fijian institution and a tool to crush Indian demands for improved labour conditions.⁵⁶⁹

The use of ethnic Fijian troops to quell the strikes by Indo-Fijian cane farmers in the 1920s, in 1943, and later in the 1959 oil workers’ strike, demonstrated what Ratuva (2011) refers to as “the ambiguity between the role of the military as a national security institution and the military as an ethnically aligned organization.”⁵⁷⁰ It also marked the role of colonization in reinforcing gender construction and ethnic identities through the politicization of race and ethnicity in the sugar industry, and the militarization of ethnic relations that became a key feature of all coups.⁵⁷¹ Sanday argues that the use of a predominant Fijian military to suppress the labour rights of Indians, reflected an internal security problem underpinned by a ‘labour-capital’ conflict with an underlying ethnic dimension.⁵⁷² In this case, ‘labour-capital’ and democratic struggle came to be associated with Indians which manifested into political mobilization through the formation of an Indian political party, the National Federation Party (NFP).⁵⁷³ As Indians agitated for the security of land tenure, improved access to land and better prices for sugarcane, their struggle came to be stereotyped and misrepresented by European business classes and Fijian chiefs as the “Indian threat.”⁵⁷⁴

Alexander observes that colonization affected the construction of gender and ethnic identities, particularly in the militarization and politicization of race and ethnicity in the struggle for power and resources in the sugar industry.⁵⁷⁵ The deployment of a predominantly ethnic Fijian military against an Indian workforce had obviously taken a ‘racial’ profile, in which the ‘Fijian’ military was deployed to control the ‘Indian’ workforce

⁵⁶⁷Sanday, 1991: p.269

⁵⁶⁸ *ibid*

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 246

⁵⁷⁰ Ratuva, 2011: p. 101

⁵⁷¹ Alexander, 2008: p.8

⁵⁷² Sanday, 1991: p.246

⁵⁷³Sanday, 1991: pp 246-247

⁵⁷⁴*ibid*

⁵⁷⁵ Ronnie Alexander (2006). Political violence in the South Pacific: women and the coups in Fiji. *Journal of International Cooperation Studies*, Vol. 14 (1): p.3

in the sugar industry. Halapua also observes that the British had recognised much earlier on, the existence of a military consciousness that was reinforced as a Fijian tradition and exploited it to a maximum whenever necessary.⁵⁷⁶ He states that, “[T]he colonial regime relied on the military to quell any dissidence within the colony, whether these be organised political dissidence or plain worker or farmer unrest.”⁵⁷⁷

When World War 2 broke out in 1939, Indians again refused to volunteer for war service, citing ‘pay disparity’ with European troops,⁵⁷⁸ drawing Ratu Sukuna’s criticism: “[W]hen the enemy was at the gates what did they do? For a paltry shilling they stood back and said, “Unless you give us that extra shilling we are not going to serve.”⁵⁷⁹ In another cane strike in 1943, cane farmers refused to cut their cane, prompting Ratu Sukuna’s response in the Legislative Council:

in the midst of a great war, a war for life or death... the Indians would not come forward and support the country of their adoption. They call themselves Fijians; but they have not followed the example of the Fijians.⁵⁸⁰

The refusal by Indian leaders to support the war efforts reinforced the perception by Fijian chiefs that Indians were a self-centred lot and therefore unreliable for military service particularly during a war.⁵⁸¹ This has led to the historical alienation of the Indian community from a military which has been perceived as a predominantly Fijian institution, which can be deployed as an instrument of oppression.⁵⁸² More importantly, it indicates a key factor in the dismal representation of Indians in the Fiji military, an anomaly critics have highlighted in response to the military coups.

Expansion of Fiji Military Force: World War II

The outbreak of the second World War from 1939 to 1945 presented an external opportunity for Fijian soldiers to display their combat skills. Under the command of American and New Zealand officers, two battalions with personnel drawn from Fijians,

⁵⁷⁶ Halapua, 2003: p. 50;

⁵⁷⁷ Halapua, 2003: p. 50;

⁵⁷⁸ Sanday, 1989, p.9

⁵⁷⁹ Scarr, 1983: p.291;

⁵⁸⁰ Scarr, Deryck (ed). 1983. Fiji: The Three-legged Stool: Selected Writings of Ratu Sukuna. London: Macmillan Education, p. 291, Ratu Sukuna’s address to the Legislative Council on the Cane strike, 22 Dec. 1943;

⁵⁸¹ Ibid, p. 292

⁵⁸² Sanday, 1991: p.269

Europeans, part-Europeans and Pacific islanders resident in Fiji, were sent to the Solomon Islands to join the 14th US Army Corps in the Pacific war against the Japanese.⁵⁸³ A training base was established by the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) on Laucala Bay in Suva, Fiji's capital, as a launching point for defence mobilization against anticipated Japanese invasion.⁵⁸⁴ An Indian platoon had been created within the Fiji Defence Force in 1934 as part of a policy to give Indians greater recognition and opportunity to participate in the life of the Colony.⁵⁸⁵ The platoon was disbanded in 1940, and although the excuse was a shortage of equipment, it was actually in response to Indians asking for equal pay with the Europeans. The New Zealand military authorities in command of the Fiji Army at the time, were concerned that such discontentment could spread to Fijian troops.⁵⁸⁶

The war period brought about unprecedented changes in the enhanced expansion of the Fiji military, beginning with another name change from Fiji Defence Force (FDF) in 1939 to Fiji Military Force (FMF) in 1942. By 1943, the peak war-time strength of the FMF was over 8,500, of whom 6,371 (75%) were ethnic Fijians. Ratu Sukuna had saluted the courage of a sole Indian member who had joined the FMF, noting that less than 300 Indians had enlisted in war efforts out of a population of 100,000, which "must surely be the lowest effort in the Empire, of any race that is concerned in this struggle for life or death."⁵⁸⁷ Ethnic and class considerations continued to dictate the distribution of ranks in the military during the war period. This saw several commoner Fijians being granted commission in the army, but they were hardly promoted beyond the ranks held by those of chiefly status.⁵⁸⁸

Fijians were recruited not only to fight alongside the Americans but were also organised into commando units to carry out guerrilla operations.⁵⁸⁹ The natural ability of Fijian soldiers to read the rhythm of tropical jungles and their swift instinctive responses in times of attack were distinct military assets.⁵⁹⁰ Fijian soldiers served with great distinction, proving their prowess and combat skills in 'jungle warfare' against the Japanese in the

⁵⁸³ Ratuva, 2011, p.100

⁵⁸⁴ See Sanday, 1991: p.269; Ratuva, 2011, p.100; The original NZDF site on Laucala Bay became the site of the first Pacific regional University of the South Pacific.

⁵⁸⁵ Goiran, H. 2013. The Political Roles of the Fiji Military, in Hegarty, D. and Tryon, D. (eds). Canberra: ANU E-Press, Ch. 4: p. 60;

⁵⁸⁶ *ibid*

⁵⁸⁷ Scarr, 1983: p. 291

⁵⁸⁸ Sanday, 1989;

⁵⁸⁹ Sunday Times, 16 September 2004: p. 9; cited in Halapua, 2003: p. 49;

⁵⁹⁰ Halapua, 2003: p. 49;

jungles of the Solomon Islands and Bougainville.⁵⁹¹ They earned praise and accolades from their American and British counterparts,⁵⁹² which motivated Fiji Military historian R. Howlett to write, “[T]hey lived up to the proud traditions of a warrior race and by their deeds left a heritage for the generations yet to come.”⁵⁹³ Many were awarded medals and citations for bravery during the war, the most famous of whom was Corporal Sefanaia Sukanaivalu who was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross in 1944, the highest British military honour symbolising the valour and loyalty of Fijians on the battlefield.⁵⁹⁴

Parallels between Military and Fijian social structure

A number of scholars have drawn parallels between the military institution and the indigenous Fijian social structure particularly its hierarchical structure and culture.⁵⁹⁵ Teaiwa aptly observes that Fiji’s modern military roots can be traced to a Fijian discourse of loyalty and service to the Crown of England,⁵⁹⁶ in which loyalty and military consciousness was created and reinforced as a Fijian tradition,⁵⁹⁷ through such patriotic adages as *“Noqu Kalou, Noqu Vanua,”* (For God, King and Country),⁵⁹⁸ or the borrowed motto, *“Rerevaka na Kalou ka doka na Tui”* (Fear God and honour the King).⁵⁹⁹

Attention had also been drawn to the overlap between the military hierarchy and the Fijian social structure, whereby soldiers of chiefly ranks were trained as officer cadets and deployed in higher officer ranks while the rest formed the rank and file of the military hierarchy.⁶⁰⁰ Sanday asserts that the highly structured hierarchical organization of the military, “with its warrior ethos, camaraderie and discipline,” mirrors the Fijian values of

⁵⁹¹ Firth S., Fraenkel, J. and Brij Lal. (eds) 2009. *The 2006 Military take-over in Fiji: A coup to end all coups?* Canberra: ANU E-Press, p.118;

⁵⁹² Firth et.al., 2009: p. 118;

⁵⁹³ Howlett, R.A. (1948). *The History of the Fiji Military Forces 1939-1945*. London: Crown Agents: p.148, cited in Firth et.al., 2009: p.118

⁵⁹⁴ Fiji Museum records on Corporal Sefanaia Sukanaivalu; see also Halapua, 2003: p. 49; In June 1944, Sukanaivalu’s platoon was ambushed by a large enemy force in the Bougainville and he was badly wounded from the Japanese attack. He sacrificed his life to stop his comrades from attempting to rescue him and possibly get all of them killed, by making himself visible in front of Japanese gunfire and drew the fire of the Japanese, enabling the others to escape falling into enemy hands. (see Halapua, 2003: p.49);

⁵⁹⁵ See for example: Teaiwa, 2005: p.212; Sanday, 1989: p.11; Halapua, 2003; Baledrokadroka, 2013: p. 52;

⁵⁹⁶ Teaiwa, 2005: p. 205;

⁵⁹⁷ Halapua, 2003: p. 50;

⁵⁹⁸ Baledrokadroka, 2013: p. 52

⁵⁹⁹ Fiji government’s motto, included in the coat of arms, taken from 1 Peter 2: 17 (NKJV) see also Scarr, 1983: p. 76

⁶⁰⁰ Teaiwa, 2005, p.212

communalism, in which the military holds a close affinity with the ethnic Fijian culture.⁶⁰¹ These expressions are consistent with a valorised ‘hegemonic masculinity’ in the military that overlaps with the indigenous Fijian hierarchical social system as affirmed by Sanday:

[T]he ideology of quasi-feudalism underpinning traditional Fijian society—the ideology of rulers and the ruled, of privileged chiefs and subservient commoners linked by patron-client relationships, customs, traditional and landholding – was strengthened by military service.⁶⁰²

Since cession in 1874 the patriotic adage of ‘For God, King and Country’ (*Noqu Kalou, Noqu Vanua*) had been grafted onto traditional Fijian society, while the three central tenets of the British Empire’s slogan have been successfully integrated into the three pillars of Fijian society as, ‘*Lotu, Vanua kei na Matanitu (Church, Culture and State)*’.⁶⁰³ While recruiting Fijians for war duty, Ratu Sukuna had reportedly impressed upon them that, “*E da na sega ni kilai nai Taukei kevaka e sega mada ni dave eliu na noda dra*” (“Fijians would not be recognized anywhere, unless they sacrificed their blood on the battlefields”).⁶⁰⁴ In the 96 years of British rule, this slogan has reinforced the Fijian mindset of military service in the two world wars and the Malayan campaign in the 1950’s.

The same conception had extended to the relationship between Fijians and the ‘colonial government,’ which was referred to in Fijian as “*matanitu*” (government), shortened for “*mata ni Turaga*” (representative of the chiefs).⁶⁰⁵ As Ratu Sukuna once stated,

with such a conception of the ‘State,’ loyalty, obedience and respect for authority should be the leading qualities of the Fijian ethical sense. And so, the ‘good man’ in Fijian society was he ... who gave obedience to authority, and ... submitted to the will of his chief as the personification of the ‘State.’

⁶⁰¹ Sanday, 1989, p.9

⁶⁰² *ibid*

⁶⁰³ Baledrokadroka, J. 2013. The Political Roles of the Fiji Military, in Hegarty, D. and Tryon, D. (eds). *Politics, Development and Security in Oceania*. Canberra: ANU E-Press, Ch. 3: p. 52;

⁶⁰⁴ Ravuvu, A. 1974. *Fijians at War*. Suva: IPS Publications, p. 4; cited in Baledrokadroka, J. 2009. *Fijian Ethno-Nationalism*, in Fraenkel, J., Firth, S., and Lal, B. *The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji*. Canberra: ANU E-Press, Ch.28: p. 418;

⁶⁰⁵ Information by Rev. Dr Ilaita Sevati Tuwere, Methodist Church Superintendent, Tabacakakaka o Viti e Okaladi, Auckland Circuit, post 2012;

Ratu Sukuna emphasised that, “the Fijian regards the government as the Chief, as it were of the Tribe,”⁶⁰⁶ which reinforces the conception of the government or state as a male hegemony that is synonymous with the rule of the chiefs.

Post-World War II: British Army and Malayan campaign

Fijian military commitment expanded further in the decade following the second World War. The reputation of Fijian soldiers in the second World War had inspired the colonial government to request an infantry battalion to help combat communist insurgency in Malaya.⁶⁰⁷ The ‘Fiji Infantry Regiment’ was despatched to participate in a joint military operation (Malaya campaign) under the command of the 17th Gurkha division.⁶⁰⁸ A further 300 Fijian military and naval personnel were recruited alongside personnel from New Zealand and the U.K. to participate in the British nuclear testing programmes on Christmas Island in the late 1950s.⁶⁰⁹ Halapua observes that, “[T]he participation of Fijian chiefs as officers in the two campaigns, enhanced in Fijian eyes, the ideology of a warrior people, which many linked to the tradition of war and militarism as epitomised by the *bati*.”⁶¹⁰

As British citizens had become war-weary following World War II with little motivation to enlist in post-war efforts, peacetime conscription had wound up by 1960,⁶¹¹ prompting the British Army (BA) to recruit from its colonies. In 1961, the British Army embarked on a recruitment process in Fiji and a few Caribbean colonies, resulting in about 200 Fiji men and 12 women being enlisted, including the first group of Fiji women to be drafted into any military.⁶¹² The twelve women represented the BA’s attempt to account for Fiji’s ethnic diversity, by recruiting seven women of mixed European and Fijian heritage (referred to as ‘*kai loma*’ or mixed race), three Fijian women, one Rotuman and one Indo-Fijian.⁶¹³ The majority of the women had completed secondary school while one had completed tertiary

⁶⁰⁶ Scarr, D. 1983, p.47

⁶⁰⁷ Sanday, 1991;

⁶⁰⁸ Halapua, 2003: p. 49;

⁶⁰⁹ See for example, Tubanavau-Salabula, L., Namoce, J. and Maclellan, N. 1999. Kirisimasi: Fijian troops at Britain’s Christmas Island nuclear tests. Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC): Suva, Fiji; Halapua, 2003: p. 49;

⁶¹⁰ Halapua, 2003: p. 50;

⁶¹¹ Teaiwa, T. 2015. What makes Fiji women soldiers? Context, context, context. *Intersections: Gender and sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, Issue 37: p.3/8 in <http://intersections.anu.edu.u/issue37/teaiwa.htm>

⁶¹² *Ibid*, p.4/8

⁶¹³ Teaiwa, T. 2015. What makes Fiji women soldiers? Context, context, context. *Intersections: Gender and sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, Issue 37: p.5/8 in <http://intersections.anu.edu.u/issue37/teaiwa.htm>

qualification.⁶¹⁴ The twelve women served in the Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC) under three-year contracts, and it appeared that they were not offered opportunity for renewal.⁶¹⁵ While the 200 male recruits were posted to different military bases in Britain, Germany and other British territories in Europe such as Cyprus, the WRAC had stationed the Fiji women in service mostly around England.⁶¹⁶

Militarisation has been regarded as a powerful tool of cultural governance that uses gender to further its goals, whereby women would be seen to support their sons, husbands or partners going off to war in defence of freedom or democracy for their nation or that of others.⁶¹⁷ Women are often stereotyped into the role of victims of war and militarism, yet Cock challenges us to remember that women can, and do actually support the war machinery and militarism created by men.⁶¹⁸ This may occur directly or indirectly, in their role as mothers, wives, girlfriends or in support service provider roles such as nurses or spies or as entertainers like bar tenders, singers, dancers, cheerleaders even as prostitutes.⁶¹⁹ These supportive roles place women on the "periphery" away from the centre of combat,⁶²⁰ but at the same time providing a 'service' for men in the military bases.

Unlike the women who replaced men in the arms manufacturing factories to prop up the war machinery in Britain during the two world wars,⁶²¹ the only mention of any direct role of women in Fiji's war efforts was a reference to the New Zealand Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) who were deployed as telegraph operators in Fiji.⁶²² The Army Corps was formed out of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) to enable the Royal New Zealand

⁶¹⁴Teaiwa, T. 2015. What makes Fiji women soldiers? Context, context, context. *Intersections: Gender and sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, Issue 37: p.5/8 in <http://intersections.anu.edu.u/issue37/teaiwa.htm>

⁶¹⁵Teaiwa, T. 2015. What makes Fiji women soldiers? Context, context, context. *Intersections: Gender and sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, Issue 37: p.5/8 in <http://intersections.anu.edu.u/issue37/teaiwa.htm>

⁶¹⁶ *ibid*

⁶¹⁷ Alexander, 2006, p.6

⁶¹⁸ Cock, J. 1992. *Women, the Military and Militarization: Some questions raised by the South African case.* Seminar No. 7, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, p.51

⁶¹⁹ *ibid*

⁶²⁰ Enloe, C. 1984. *Does Khaki become you? The militarization of women's lives.* London: Pluto Press, p.15

⁶²¹ Cock, 1992, p. 51

⁶²² Women's Auxiliary Air Force founded, 16 January 1941, in <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/foundation-of-the-womens-auxiliary-air-force>

Air Force (RNZAF) to release more men for overseas service during the Second World War.⁶²³

There was however, a glowing description of a large canteen that was set up at the old Government buildings in Suva to provide recreation and light refreshment for troops stationed in Fiji.⁶²⁴ The canteen was managed by Lady Maraia, wife of Ratu Sukuna, and a group of Fijian girls, providing “immense boon to troops on leave.”⁶²⁵ This service was similar to the “kava saloons” in Suva which were popular places of entertainment and relaxation for ex-servicemen between the two world wars.⁶²⁶ The presence of Fijian women in these saloons raised stereotypical attitudes about their moral or loose character, by leaving the confines and “safety” of the Fijian villages for the ‘kava saloons’ in the city.⁶²⁷ Ratu Sukuna noted for example that “the value of protests...entered against Fijian women serving in kava saloons wholly rests on the moral effects these resorts have on native character.”⁶²⁸ The negative attitudes towards Fijian women who dared to venture into public spaces did not extend to women of mixed race (“kai loma”) who were not subjected to strict moral standards compared to village women.⁶²⁹

Political changes towards Independence 1960 -1970

During the post-war years, the colonial government gradually progressed towards a more representative government.⁶³⁰ By the 1960s, the political agenda had changed substantially with a positive outlook toward self-government.⁶³¹ Two key changes occurred in 1963, when Fijians could elect their own representatives for the first time compared to previous nominations by the Great Council of Chiefs; and women were given the right to vote for the first time, a clear recognition of the role of women in national affairs.⁶³² By 1964, a new membership system was introduced in the Legislative Council in which elected

⁶²³ Women’s Auxiliary Air Force founded, 16 January 1941, in

<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/foundation-of-the-womens-auxiliary-air-force>

⁶²⁴ Teaiwa, T. 2008. *On Women and ‘Indians’: The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion in Militarized Fiji*, in Sutton, B., S. Morgen and J. Novkov (eds) *Security disarmed: critical perspectives on gender, race and militarization*, New Jersey, USA: Rutgers, State University Press, p.124;

⁶²⁵ *ibid*

⁶²⁶ Scarr, 1983, p.98

⁶²⁷ *ibid*

⁶²⁸ Scarr, 1983, p.98

⁶²⁹ *Ibid*, The Fijian administration regulation required all villagers, men and women to report to the ‘*Turaga ni koro*’ (village headman) whenever they left the village to go to Suva and when they returned (see Ratu Sukuna’s letters in Scarr, D. 1983;

⁶³⁰ Tavola, 1991, p.14

⁶³¹ Donnelly et.al., p.54

⁶³² Donnelly et.al., p.54

members controlled important government departments, which was a foreshadow of Ministerial cabinet positions, although they were still responsible to the Governor rather than the people.⁶³³

In a move towards granting the people more power, the voting system which remained under separate 'communal' race-based rolls, was a political bone of contention as electors voted in their own racial groupings or communities.⁶³⁴ Ali commented that "race continued to be an accepted and institutionalized factor in the colony's politics."⁶³⁵ Harping on the 'equality' flag, a section of the Indian community felt strongly that the balance of representation was not even, and that voters should be placed on a 'common roll' to vote for the candidate of their choice regardless of 'race.' Indians felt that European electors had more representatives relative to their number or to the number of Fijian or Indian electors. European and Fijian opposition was based on the concern that a common roll would give Indians far greater number of representatives since they had outnumbered Fijians and other electors since the end of World War 2.⁶³⁶

In 1965, constitutional talks between representatives of the two major political parties, the Alliance party and the National Federation Party (NFP), were held in London to work out the constitutional framework as Fiji moved steadily towards self-government and eventual independence.⁶³⁷ The issue of 'common roll' continued to create a deadlock which threatened consensus and the reality of independence. As Tavola states, "there was much acrimonious debate on the topic of fears of Indian domination."⁶³⁸ The Legislative Council made a further increase of allocated seats which gave Fijians a slight numerical majority.

Elections were held for the first time in 1966, which was contested by the NFP and the Alliance Party (AP) led by Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, which won the elections and formed the government. Further talks were held between the NFP and the Alliance in London in 1969 and 1970, which finally agreed to a compromise that some legislators were to be elected

⁶³³ Donnelly et.al., p.54: Under this system, three members of the Legislative Council were appointed to the Executive Council to be in charge of government departments, with the title, 'Member.' Thus, Mr John Falvey became Member for Communications and Works, Ratu Kamisese Mara was 'Member' for Natural Resources, and Mr A.D. Patel as 'Member' Social Services.

⁶³⁴ Donnelly et.al., p.55

⁶³⁵ Ali, Ahmed. 1980. *Plantation to Politics: Studies on Fiji Indians*. Suva: University of the South Pacific, p.150; as cited in Tavola, p.24

⁶³⁶ Tavola, p.13

⁶³⁷ Ibid, p.25

⁶³⁸ Tavola, p.25, also cited Scarr, D. 1984. *Fiji. A Short History*. Hawaii: Brigham Young University, The Institute of Polynesian Studies, p. 170

from a common roll by all races as the Indians desired, while other seats remained communal to be elected only by members of their own racial group, as the Fijians preferred.⁶³⁹ On 10 October 1970, Fiji gained independence from the United Kingdom, with a Dominion status as a full member of the British Commonwealth and inherited a democratic system of constitutional parliamentary democracy based on the British Westminster model.

Independence: Inheriting the Old and creating a New Order

Unlike nations that had gone through armed struggle during decolonisation to gain independence, Fiji's transition from a crown colony was the outcome of peaceful negotiations.⁶⁴⁰ The withdrawal of the British colonial authorities opened up political space for the formation of secondary groups, articulating different interests, new power relations and influence.⁶⁴¹ Three outstanding "race"-based problems remained after the British left and locals took over: one, to what extent should 'Europeans' be involved in government, two, how to protect the interests of 'Fijians' as indigenous peoples of Fiji, and three, how to ensure equality for the 'Indians' who represented over half of the population.⁶⁴² The first issue became redundant after independence when representation became a two-party battle between the Indian-dominated NFP and the Fijian-controlled and dominated Alliance party (AP). The two remaining issues were accommodated through the voting system under the 1970 Constitution, with representation under the 'communal' roll in which 12 Fijians, 12 Indians and 3 General voters got elected by their own racial groups, while the 'National' roll provided for all voters to elect 10 Fijians, 10 Indians and 5 General members.⁶⁴³

Political leadership at Independence: Rule of the Eastern Chiefs

Leading the young nation was Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, leader of the Alliance Party, along with three other high chiefs, all kinsmen, who had been mentored in the 1950s and 1960s by their relative Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna as his successors.⁶⁴⁴ The four high chiefs

⁶³⁹ Donnelly et.al., 1994, pp. 56-57; Tavola, 1991, p.25

⁶⁴⁰ Baledrokadroka, J. 2012. The Unintended Consequences of Fiji's International Peacekeeping, in *Security Challenges*, Vol. 8 (4): p.105;

⁶⁴¹ Sanday, 1991, p.247, citing Hegarty, 1989: 1;

⁶⁴² Donnelly et.al., p.60

⁶⁴³ 1970 Fiji Constitution, S. 32 "Number and Method of Election of Members, p. 40/112; also Donnelly, p.58;

⁶⁴⁴ Kenneth Bain. 17/12/1993. Obituary: Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, in

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-ratu-sir-penaia-ganilau-1467936.html>

(referred to as the 'Big Four') who played key roles in the first post-independent government included Ratu Sir Edward Cakobau, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Labour until his death in 1973, his cousin⁶⁴⁵ and Vunivalu of Bau, Ratu Sir George Cakobau, Minister for Fijian Affairs from 1970 until his appointment as the first Fijian Governor General from 1973 to 1983, and his first cousin⁶⁴⁶ Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, who served in various Cabinet portfolios including Minister for Home Affairs and Fijian Affairs and became Deputy Prime Minister on the death of Ratu Edward in 1973.⁶⁴⁷ In 1983, Ratu Penaia succeeded Ratu Sir George as Governor General until the constitutional crises following the two military coups in 1987, when he became the first President of the Republic of Fiji.⁶⁴⁸

Through blood ties and marriage, the 'Big Four' chiefs were direct descendants of Ratu Cakobau and the eastern chiefs that had dominated tribal warfare and politics in the pre-colonial and colonial era; all four had been mentored by their relative and elder statesman Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna, and apart from Ratu Mara, had served the military with distinction. All four chiefs had received training in public service and overseas Universities and institutions to prepare them in the governance of the new nation.⁶⁴⁹

Sanday notes that the indirect rule instituted by the colonial government through which the eastern chiefly elites had maintained tenuous control over the rest of Fiji, had also established the concept of political legitimacy which was based on the belief that political leadership in Fiji was the exclusive preserve of Fijian chiefs, more precisely, the eastern chiefly oligarchy.⁶⁵⁰

Fiji Military Force at Independence: Nation building

The new sovereign state inherited the post-war Fiji Defence Force (FDF) which at independence had become the Royal Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) which still remained predominantly 95 percent ethnic Fijian.⁶⁵¹ By the mid-1970s the Alliance government had embarked on fundamental changes which expanded the role of the military in non-core

⁶⁴⁵ Ratu Sir Edward and Ratu Sir George were third cousins, and great grandsons of Ratu Seru Cakobau who led the chiefs of Fiji in the cession of Fiji to UK in 1874.

⁶⁴⁶ Ratu Penaia Kanatabatu Ganilau of the Ai Sokula clan from Somosomo, Taveuni was the son of Ratu Epeli Ganilau, whose sister Adi Torika married Ratu Popi Seniloli of Bau, and was the mother of Ratu George Kadavulevu Cakobau, son of Ratu Popi.

⁶⁴⁷ Kenneth Bain. 17/12/1993. Obituary: Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, in <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-ratu-sir-penaia-ganilau-1467936.html>

⁶⁴⁸ *ibid*

⁶⁴⁹ *ibid*

⁶⁵⁰ Sanday, 1989, p.6

⁶⁵¹ Goiran, 2013: p.62

(non-defence) activities including nation building, internal security and international peacekeeping.⁶⁵² The focus on nation building led to the establishment of the Trade Training School in 1974, the Engineers Rural Development Unit and the Naval Division in 1975 which saw the military increase to over three times its size since independence.⁶⁵³

Rapid expansion in the size of the Fiji military by the mid-70s under the Alliance government, had also forged closer links between the Fiji military force and the Alliance party, which had transformed the role of the military from protecting the nation against foreign aggression to one of protecting entrenched power groups within the country against the wishes of the majority,⁶⁵⁴ or as Halapua suggests, from an armed force of the nation to an armed force of the chiefly elite in the country.⁶⁵⁵

Recruitment into the Fiji Military Force (FMF) continued to be drawn exclusively from the ethnic Fijian community, based on assessed military suitability and political reliability through allegiance to those in control of government.⁶⁵⁶ The new ethnic criteria for suitability ratings in the military had shifted at independence, placing ethnic Fijians at the top, then part-Europeans, Europeans while Indo-Fijians remained at the bottom.⁶⁵⁷ The ethnic criteria for military suitability after independence according to Sanday, was influenced by exploiting tribal and provincial cleavages and links to political governance, in which recruitment was perceived to be drawn more from the islands, particularly the Tovata confederacy,⁶⁵⁸ the power base of the influential eastern chiefs who controlled government.⁶⁵⁹ Officers in the military continued to be appointed from the ruling chiefly class, while educated commoners and other ethnic groups were also co-opted into the office corps.⁶⁶⁰ Similar to the “*turaga-bati*” relationship in pre-colonial era, Sanday asserts that the “chief-commoner” dichotomy within the military continued to reflect the class composition of Fijian communalism.⁶⁶¹

⁶⁵² Baledrokadroka, 2013: p. 52

⁶⁵³ *ibid*

⁶⁵⁴ Baledrokadroka, 2013: p. 52

⁶⁵⁵ *ibid*

⁶⁵⁶ Sanday, 1989: p. 6

⁶⁵⁷ *ibid*, p.13

⁶⁵⁸ Tovata confederacy is headed by the Tui Cakau, paramount chief of Cakaudrove, and consists of Cakaudrove, Lau, Macuata, Bua. The Tui Lau and paramount chief of Lau was Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara while Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau assumed the title of Tui Cakau from 1988-1993.

⁶⁵⁹ Sanday, 1989: p. 6

⁶⁶⁰ *ibid*, p. 6

⁶⁶¹ Sanday, 1989: p.11

Apart from the predominantly Fijian membership of the Fiji military at independence, the military's ethnic identity was enhanced by the adoption of ethnic symbolism such as the 'sulu vakataga'⁶⁶² (man's skirt with side pockets) in the military dress code, the traditional presentation of 'tabua' (whale's tooth) and the holding of 'kava' ceremony during ceremonial occasions.⁶⁶³ The Fiji military force also has a long established customary association with the Methodist church, which is symbolised by prayer sessions during ceremonial traditions and since the beginning of global peacekeeping deployment, the appointment and posting of a military Chaplain from the Methodist church.⁶⁶⁴ Using ethnic Fijian and Christian religious symbols reinforces in the minds of soldiers that their uniforms symbolize not only defence of the country but also communal pride and interests.⁶⁶⁵

In the first four years of independence, the position of Commander Fiji Military Forces had remained within the professional military-technocratic tradition from which previous colonial Commanders were drawn.⁶⁶⁶ This changed in 1974 when Colonel Paul Manueli, an ethnic Rotuman was appointed the first local Commander of the FMF. Eight years later in 1982, Manueli was succeeded by Brigadier Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, who became the first ethnic Fijian Military Commander. Ratu Nailatikau was the son of the late Ratu Edward Cakobau, and son-in-law of Prime Minister Ratu Mara, whose appointment reinforced traditional Fijian values within the military by having a respected chief as its head. This strengthened the perception of the Fiji military as an indigenous Fijian institution.⁶⁶⁷ Another implication of the appointment as Sanday argues, was that the military became subordinated to a narrow politicized-based ethos which encouraged the politics of clientelism within the military and the development of a patron-client relationship between senior officers and influential members of the Fijian chiefly hierarchy in power.⁶⁶⁸ Further discussion on the 'patronage' relationship between the ruling chiefly class and senior military officers, and among senior military officers, is made in Chapter 7, to examine the manipulation of political and military power in the coups, and the distribution of the spoils and excesses of the coups in Fiji.

⁶⁶² Sulu 'vakataga' was popularised by Ratu Sukuna and is a type of skirt with side pockets worn by Fijian men; expression of ethnic identity. Women's sulu consists of a long skirt with elastic band at the waste and considered appropriate in ceremonial and formal occasions.

⁶⁶³ Goiran, 2013: p. 63

⁶⁶⁴ Goiran, 2013: p. 63

⁶⁶⁵ *ibid*

⁶⁶⁶ *ibid*

⁶⁶⁷ Sanday, 1991, p.254

⁶⁶⁸ Sanday, 1989, p.12

International Peacekeeping: Masculinity as Foreign Policy⁶⁶⁹

Fiji became a member of the United Nations upon attaining independence as a sovereign nation state in 1970. In the mid-1970s, global circumstances provided a new opportunity for the employment of indigenous Fijians and a valuable source of foreign revenue for a young and developing nation like Fiji.⁶⁷⁰ The United Nations required international peacekeeping forces to support multilateral attempts to stabilise the Middle East.⁶⁷¹ Since Fijian soldiers had acquired a reputation for distinguishing themselves during World War 2 and in the British campaign against communism in Malaya in the 1950s, the UN was prompted to approach the Fiji government to contribute to a peacekeeping force in Lebanon.⁶⁷²

In 1978, the Alliance government with Ratu Kamisese Mara as Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, along with Ratu Penaia Ganilau as Minister for Home Affairs, embarked on a foreign policy decision to offer troops for the UN peacekeeping missions.⁶⁷³ This was also Fiji's opportunity to impress the international community as a responsible global citizen by proving its commitment to world peace as a new UN member state.⁶⁷⁴ This foreign policy decision was neither debated in parliament,⁶⁷⁵ nor was there any attempt by government to consider the views and concerns of those who would be affected by such a momentous decision, such as the families and wives of servicemen who, it was presumed, would have to step up and fulfil the roles left behind by the men who would soon be deployed.

International peacekeeping was a turning point for Fiji and for the Fiji Military Forces as an institution.⁶⁷⁶ Peacekeeping operations involve the use of military personnel in a UN-sponsored operation to help maintain or restore peace in areas of potential or actual

⁶⁶⁹ Enloe, C. 2005. Masculinity as foreign policy issue. Institute for Policy Studies, http://www.ipsdc.org/masculinity_as-foreign_policy_issue/

⁶⁷⁰ Teaiwa, Teresia. 2015. What Makes Fiji Women Soldiers? Context, context, context.

Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific, Issue 37, in

<http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue37/teaiwa.htm>

⁶⁷¹ *ibid*

⁶⁷² Teaiwa, T. 2015: in <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue37/teaiwa.htm>

⁶⁷³ Baledrokadroka, J. 2012. Unintended consequences of peacekeeping. *Security Challenges*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Summer 2012): p. 106

⁶⁷⁴ *ibid*

⁶⁷⁵ cited in Baledrokadroka, J. 2012. Unintended consequences of peacekeeping. *Security Challenges*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Summer 2012): p. 106

⁶⁷⁶ Baledrokadroka, 2013: p.52; Halapua, 2003: p.50;

conflict.⁶⁷⁷ Baledrokadroka suggests that the 'patron-client' relationship that had developed between the Alliance government and the predominantly ethnic Fijian military had influenced the foreign policy decision to commit Fiji troops for international peacekeeping.⁶⁷⁸ Prime Minister Ratu Mara had indicated that it would provide an important motivation and opportunity for the disciplined services and the training of youth.⁶⁷⁹ The Rabuka government continued to promote peacekeeping in the 1990s, "to give as many young men as possible the opportunity to learn discipline, serve Fiji and to experience active service in the Holy Lands."⁶⁸⁰

This thesis argues that a fundamental 'gender' rationale had formed the basis of Fiji's foreign policy on peacekeeping, in which "masculinity" was offered for global peace and security operations in the form of Fijian peacekeepers. This argument shall be analysed further in the study.

Global Peacekeeping Missions: 1978-2018

It is claimed that Fiji has taken part in more peacekeeping operations than any other nation in the world,⁶⁸¹ and has sent more soldiers on peacekeeping missions than any other nation on a per capita basis, providing much needed revenue for the nation, and enhancing its global standing.⁶⁸²

The first deployment on a peacekeeping mission began in May 1978, when a light infantry battalion of up to 725 men joined the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to provide a buffer between Israeli and Lebanese-based anti-Israeli groups.⁶⁸³ It was originally

⁶⁷⁷ In, The United Nations at Forty: A Foundation to build on (UN Dept of Public Information, New York, 1985; cited in Sanday, J. 1998. UN Peacekeeping, UNIFIL and the Fijian Experience. Working Paper No. 320, Canberra: p. 7;

⁶⁷⁸ In Sanday, J. 1998. UN Peacekeeping, UNIFIL and the Fijian Experience. Working Paper No. 320, Canberra: p. 7;

⁶⁷⁹ In K.K.T.Mara. 1997. The Pacific Way: A memoir. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, p. 140 as cited in Sanday, 1998: p. 33;

⁶⁸⁰ 1997 Defense White Paper, p. 58; cited in Tarte, S. 2010. 'Fiji islands: Security Challenges and Defense Policy issues,' in Asia Pacific Countries Security Outlook and Implications for the Defense Sector, National Institute for Defense Studies Joint Research Series No.5, Tokyo, Ch. 5: p. 81 [pp 67-84];

⁶⁸¹ Andrew Roberts. 2006. A history of the English-speaking Peoples since 1900. London: Widenfeld and Nicolson: p. 644; cited in Baledrokadroka, 2012: p. 105;

⁶⁸² ABC/Reuters, 11/9/2014. Syria's Nusra Front releases U.N. peacekeepers in Golan, in <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-fiji/syrias-nusra-front-releases-u-n-peacekeepers-in-golan-idUSKBN0H60C120140911>

⁶⁸³ Baledrokadroka, 2012: p. 105;

intended that the Fijian soldiers would remain in Lebanon for only a year or so, but they ended up staying for more than two decades until 2004.⁶⁸⁴

In 1979 a transitional force, the Fiji Observer Group for Africa (FOGA) was deployed for three months which was followed by a detachment to Zimbabwe in 1980.⁶⁸⁵ A battalion served with the Multinational Force & Observers (MFO) in the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt from 1982, to monitor the peace accord between Egypt and Israel.⁶⁸⁶ RFMF officers also served as observers in war-torn Afghanistan between 1988 and 1993, and with the US-led 'Operation Desert Storm' in Iraq in 1991.⁶⁸⁷ Between 1992 and 1993, RFMF personnel served with UNISOM mission in Somalia. Closer to home in the Pacific, Fijian soldiers joined a coalition of Pacific Island Forces in an Australian-sponsored mission codenamed 'Operation Blue Lagoon,' to intervene in a civil war in Bougainville in 1994.⁶⁸⁸ Between 2000 and 2005, a company strength served with the International Force in East Timor (INTERFET) also sponsored by the Australian Government, which later gave way to a UN operation codenamed the 'United Nations Transition Assistance East Timor' (UNTAET).⁶⁸⁹ In 2003 a company strength was deployed to the Solomon Islands as part of the Regional Assistance Mission [in the] Solomon Islands (RAMSI).⁶⁹⁰ The FMF was invited by the United Nations in 2004 to observe and secure UN positions, installations and personnel in Iraq under the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI). Following the withdrawal of the Austrian Defence Force from the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in 2013, the RFMF deployed a battalion to assist in monitoring a ceasefire between Israel and Syria on the Golan Heights as part of UNDOF operations.⁶⁹¹

A further 100 Fijian peacekeepers serving with the UNDOF on the Golan Heights were deployed to Lebanon to re-join the UNIFIL to furnish the needs of the United Nations in

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid, p.107;

⁶⁸⁵ Baledrokadroka, 2013: p 52;

⁶⁸⁶ Information available in Global Security.org on 'Fiji Peacekeeping Missions' in <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/oceania/fiji-pko.htm>

⁶⁸⁷ Information available in Global Security.org on 'Fiji Peacekeeping Missions' in <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/oceania/fiji-pko.htm>

⁶⁸⁸ ibid

⁶⁸⁹ ibid

⁶⁹⁰ Information available in Global Security.org on 'Fiji Peacekeeping Missions' in <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/oceania/fiji-pko.htm>

⁶⁹¹ Information available in Global Security.org on 'Fiji Peacekeeping Missions' in <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/oceania/fiji-pko.htm>

December 2014.⁶⁹² Further missions in 2015 extended Fijian soldiers' peacekeeping engagement not only in Lebanon, but also in Iraq, Egypt (Sinai) and Syria (Golan Heights).⁶⁹³

Fijian soldiers have also served in other peacekeeping missions including the UN Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES) between 1996 and 1997, the UN Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) from 1991 to 1997, UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) in 1991, the Commonwealth Cease Fire Monitoring Force (CMF) from 1979 to 1980, UN Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM) between 1992 and 1993, UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) from February to May 1992, UN Good Offices Mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan (UNGOMAP) from 1988 to 1993, UN Guard Contingent in Iraq (UNGCI) since 1991, and the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) between 1993 and 1994.⁶⁹⁴

As at 28 February 2018, Fiji ranked 36th out of 123 troops contributing countries for peacekeeping with a total of 655 personnel on peacekeeping missions, including police, UN military experts, staff officers and troops, with a gender make-up of 604 men and 51 women, or 8 percent of Fiji's total peacekeeping force.⁶⁹⁵ The top ten troop contributing countries in the same period were mostly from Africa and Asia, which included by order of ranking, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Rwanda, India, Pakistan Nepal, Egypt, Indonesia, Tanzania and Ghana.⁶⁹⁶ These countries share two common features with Fiji, first, the majority are developing countries with more pressing development needs and could least afford the diversion of scarce funds from their national coffers to subsidise international peace and security concerns that should be borne by the more developed countries,⁶⁹⁷ and the majority if not all of these countries, share a common history of military coups and military regimes.

Despite the increased intake of soldiers for peacekeeping since 1978, the ethnic composition of the Fiji military Forces has remained at a steady level of 95 percent

⁶⁹² Information available in Global Security.org on 'Fiji Peacekeeping Missions' in <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/oceania/fiji-pko.htm>

⁶⁹³ Radio New Zealand, 13/12/2014. Fiji peacekeepers head to Lebanon, in <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/261661/fiji-peacekeepers-head-to-lebanon>

⁶⁹⁴ Ratuva, 2011: p. 100

⁶⁹⁵ Summary of Troop contributing countries by Ranking, 28/02/2018, in https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/2_country_ranking_report.pdf

⁶⁹⁶ *ibid*

⁶⁹⁷ Sanday, 1998, pp 27-28;

indigenous Fijian men since independence.⁶⁹⁸ Ratuva suggests that despite attempts to introduce affirmative action at recruitment drives, the indigenous 'Fijian image' and the 'military culture' has made it difficult for other ethnic groups, particularly Indo-Fijians, to join the Fiji military.⁶⁹⁹

A gender analysis on the impact of peacekeeping is made in Chapter 5 which investigates the evolving role of the Fiji military since independence.

Peacekeepers as Private security guards

Since the 1990s, global peacekeeping has paved the way for former peacekeepers to seek employment as private security guards or to join the British Army. Nic Maclellan reported in 2006 that over 1,000 Fijians were working in Iraq and Kuwait as soldiers, security guards, drivers and labourers, while more than 2,500 Fijians had joined the British army.⁷⁰⁰ He noted that at least eight Fijians working in Iraq have been killed with many others wounded, and that deployment to the Middle East were popular and widely accepted in Fiji, "because of the significant remittances flowing to rural villagers."⁷⁰¹ Maclellan also asserts that the training the Fijian troops gained while serving overseas as peacekeepers placed them on solid grounds to take on lucrative roles as security contractors.⁷⁰² When the US was looking for support during the Iraq war in 2003 and few allies were willing to commit troops, there was heavy reliance on private contractors.⁷⁰³ Fijian troops who had experience in Lebanon and other war-torn missions were perfect candidates to take up these roles with private security companies, and the money they earned was far better than other options back home.⁷⁰⁴ The Iraq War had brought more income to Fiji from the 1,000 or so Fijians who have served as escorts, guards and drivers for companies in the business of privatised security in war zones such as Global Strategies, Triple Canopy, Armor Group International, DynCorp International, Control Solutions and Sandline International.⁷⁰⁵

⁶⁹⁸ Ratuva, 2011: p.99;

⁶⁹⁹ *ibid*

⁷⁰⁰ Maclellan, N. 2006. Fiji, the war in Iraq and the privatisation of Pacific island security. Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability, in <https://nautilus.org/apsnet/0611a-maclellan-html/>

⁷⁰¹ *Ibid*

⁷⁰² As cited by Burrows, I. 2014. Fijian UN peacekeepers: Cash, experience a lure although fears remain following abductions in Syria, in <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-09-02/cash,-experience-a-boon-for-fijian-un-peacekeepers/5714222>; see also Maclellan, N. 2006. Fiji, the war in Iraq, and the privatisation of Pacific island security, in Nautilus Institute, <https://nautilus.org/apsnet/0611a-maclellan-html/>

⁷⁰³ *ibid*

⁷⁰⁴ Sanday, 1998: p. 34

⁷⁰⁵ Fraenkel and Firth, 2009: p. 119;

The employment of Fijian soldiers as mercenaries brought a new dimension to the hiring of former Fijian soldiers as private security guards, adding new problems in the relations between the Fiji government and island neighbours like Papua New Guinea.⁷⁰⁶ In February 2006, twelve former Fiji soldiers alleged to be ‘mercenaries’ were arrested in Honiara, Solomon Islands on their way to Bougainville via the Solomon Islands’ western province.⁷⁰⁷ The ‘mercenaries’ were recruited and trained by Nausori-based company ‘Ronin High Risk Security,’ a security company formed by Ilisoni Ligairi, the former Special Air Service (SAS) trained leader of the Counter-Revolutionary Warfare (CRW) gunmen in Speight’s coup of 2000.⁷⁰⁸ In response to breaking news in 2015 that former Fiji military force soldiers were working in Bougainville, the Fiji government stated that it was powerless to stop the recruitment of former soldiers with private security companies overseas such as that of former failed money scam operator Noah Musingku of Bougainville.⁷⁰⁹

In October 2017, the government of Papua New Guinea (PNG) expressed disapproval over the hiring of Fijian private security guards by a security contractor Paladin Solutions to oversee the closure of the Australian asylum-centre detention centre on Manus Island.⁷¹⁰ According to the report, dozens of former Fijian soldiers, police, and prison officers had been recruited by Paladin to secure facilities on Manus Island after the Australia-run detention centre officially closed down. The men were turned away when PNG refused to grant visas.⁷¹¹ The Director of the company based in Fiji had stated, “The personnel are going there to look after the relationship between the asylum seekers and the natives.”⁷¹² What began as the recruitment of Fijian security contractors in Iraq and Kuwait following the Iraq war in 2003, had now turned to seeking opportunities in the mining and resource

⁷⁰⁶ Maclellan, 2006 in <https://nautilus.org/apsnet/0611a-maclellan-html/>

⁷⁰⁷ *ibid*

⁷⁰⁸ Radio New Zealand, 7/2/2006. Fiji says powerless to stop security guards heading to PNG rebel zone, in <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/160141/fiji-says-powerless-to-stop-security-guards-heading-to-png-rebel-zone>; SAS stands for

⁷⁰⁹ Radio New Zealand, 7/2/2006. Fiji says powerless to stop security guards heading to PNG rebel zone, in <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/160141/fiji-says-powerless-to-stop-security-guards-heading-to-png-rebel-zone>

⁷¹⁰ Radio New Zealand, 30/10/2017. PNG disapproves of Manus contracts for Fijians, in <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/342675/png-govt-disapproves-of-manus-contracts-for-fijians>

⁷¹¹ Radio New Zealand, 30/10/2017. PNG disapproves of Manus contracts for Fijians, in <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/342675/png-govt-disapproves-of-manus-contracts-for-fijians>

⁷¹² *ibid*

sector across the Pacific especially PNG and the Solomon Islands, or to guard government facilities, the provision of supplies or the hiring of mercenaries by foreign corporations.⁷¹³

These cases underscore the extent to which militarization has become an incentive for former soldiers and peacekeepers to earn income as private security guards and/or mercenaries not only in the Middle East, but also at home in the Pacific.

Safety concerns over Global Peacekeeping

The economic benefits of peacekeeping must be balanced against the heavy costs incurred by individual families of peacekeepers and the nation as a whole. A total of 51 lives have been lost in peacekeeping operations, about 37 of these deaths occurred in Lebanon during the UNIFIL operation, while more than a hundred have been wounded or injured in various operations.⁷¹⁴ The deaths underline the high risks of global peacekeeping, which had sparked grave concerns over the safety of Fijian servicemen in this volatile part of the world.⁷¹⁵ The dangerous nature of some of these fatalities have been perturbing, ranging from road-side bombing, vehicular ambush, sniper fire, fire-fights, and abductions in which two soldiers were abducted at gunpoint and executed by local armed elements.⁷¹⁶ In 2003, Fijian troops on UN peacekeeping duties with UNTAET in East Timor were involved in a fierce gun battle with militia guerrillas in the jungles.⁷¹⁷

Kidnap of Fijian peacekeepers: August 2014

Fiji's role in international peacekeeping has been amplified through the policy of "friends to all and foe to none."⁷¹⁸ Yet for the first time in the history of Fiji peacekeeping, forty-five Fijian peacekeepers serving with the UN Disengagement and Observer Forces (UNDOF) in the Golan Heights were captured and held hostage on 28 August 2014 on the Syrian-controlled side of the Golan Heights, by fighters from the Nusra Front who have been

⁷¹³ Radio New Zealand, 30/10/2017. PNG disapproves of Manus contracts for Fijians, in <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/342675/png-govt-disapproves-of-manus-contracts-for-fijians>

⁷¹⁴ Sanday, 1998: p.26

⁷¹⁵ *ibid*

⁷¹⁶ *ibid*

⁷¹⁷ Radio New Zealand, 1/3/2003. Fiji peacekeepers in gun battle with East Timor guerrillas, in <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/142643/fiji-peacekeepers-in-gun-battle-with-east-timor-guerillas>

⁷¹⁸ Fiji peacekeeping missions in Global Security, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/oceania/fiji-pko.htm>

battling Syrian government forces in the contested buffer zone between Syria and Israel.⁷¹⁹ The abducted men were held in an unknown location, which highlighted the severe challenges that Fiji and other troop contributing countries faced in global peacekeeping efforts.⁷²⁰ The Fijians were reportedly seized in retaliation against what the rebels allege as the UN ignoring the “daily shedding of the Muslims’ blood in Syria,” and doing nothing to help the Syrian people since the uprising against President Assad of Syria began in March 2011.⁷²¹ In the same incident, the captors had demanded the surrender of Filipino troops who engaged them in a firefight and managed to escape.⁷²²

Baledrokadroka admitted that it was “quite disturbing” to see Fijians surrender while the Filipinos had escaped, as it was the duty of every soldier to resist being captured.⁷²³ As a former soldier, he was shocked at what served as a big blow to Fijian martial tradition, as Fijians have been known as warriors down through the ages.⁷²⁴ Furthermore, Baledrokadroka believes the Golan Heights deployment was rushed, implying that they lacked the logistics and training for such a deployment. They also lacked the kind of sophisticated hardware that other militaries relied on to keep their troops safe and to be able to deal with the escalating violence in Syria.⁷²⁵

The Fijians were finally released after being held hostage for two weeks which was the longest kidnapping incident of UN peacekeepers so far.⁷²⁶ A UN spokesman said that no ransom had been requested for the Fijian peacekeepers and none was paid.⁷²⁷ As a

⁷¹⁹ Daily Mail, 12 Sept. 2014. In <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2753229/Fijian-peacekeepers-hailed-heroes-released-Syrian-al-Qaeda-group-captured-Israeli-border.html>

⁷²⁰ Perry, N. 2014. Questions after Fiji peacekeepers captured, in New Zealand Herald, https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/news/article.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=11319917

⁷²¹ Fiji Sun, 5/9/2014. UN seeks help to free Fijian Peacekeepers abducted in Syrian Golan, <http://fijisun.com.fj/2014/09/05/un-seeks-help-to-fijian-free-peacekeepers-abducted-in-syrian-golan/>

⁷²² ibid

⁷²³ ibid

⁷²⁴ Fiji Sun, 5/9/2014. UN seeks help to free Fijian Peacekeepers abducted in Syrian Golan, <http://fijisun.com.fj/2014/09/05/un-seeks-help-to-fijian-free-peacekeepers-abducted-in-syrian-golan/>

⁷²⁵ Perry, N. 2014. Questions after Fiji peacekeepers captured, in New Zealand Herald, https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/news/article.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=11319917

⁷²⁶ Fiji Sun, 3/11/2014. Golan Incidents Highlighted at UN, in <http://fijisun.com.fj/2014/11/03/golan-incidents-highlighted-at-un/>

⁷²⁷ ibid

condition of the peacekeepers' release, their captors had posted a video⁷²⁸ on its Twitter and YouTube accounts in which one of the hostages said they expected to be freed soon:

We are all safe and alive, and we thank Jabhat-al-Nusra for keeping us safe and keeping us alive. I'd like to assure you that we have not been harmed in any way. We understand that with the limited resources that they have, they have provided the best for us and we truly appreciate it and we thank them. We are thankful that Jabhat al-Nusra has kept its word and that we will be going home.⁷²⁹

FMF Commander Tikoitoga admitted that some of the captured soldiers had no previous peacekeeping experience and had never faced the level of radicalism in one of the world's most dangerous and volatile regions.⁷³⁰ He said that there was "a mixture of old soldiers and new soldiers...In every peacekeeping mission we go to, we take new soldiers as well."⁷³¹

The UN Resident Coordinator in Fiji had assured that the UN peacekeepers are well vetted, and the training, preparation and background of the troops are scrutinised very carefully, with the intention of sending troops who are not meant to be in any danger at all.⁷³² While countries like Austria and Croatia had withdrawn their troops and others like the Philippines planned to pull out from the region due to concerns over the safety of their peacekeepers, it was concerning that the Fiji military was still eager to commit troops after Commander Tikoitoga stated they were prepared to replace the 45 troops if and when they are released, in case some of them needed to recuperate.⁷³³ Interim prime minister Bainimarama pledged to continue to provide peacekeepers as it is "a noble mission that we will continue to perform whenever we are called on by the United Nations."⁷³⁴

⁷²⁸Al Qaeda-linked rebels release video of captured UN peacekeepers 알 카에다 알누스라, See in, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=um9z-LyZY_o

⁷²⁹ Associated Press, World News, 11/9/2014. Syria's Nusra Front releases U.N. peacekeepers in Golan, in <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-fiji/syrias-nusra-front-releases-u-n-peacekeepers-in-golan-idUSKBN0H60C120140911>

⁷³⁰ Associated Press, World News, 11/9/2014. Syria's Nusra Front releases U.N. peacekeepers in Golan, in <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-fiji/syrias-nusra-front-releases-u-n-peacekeepers-in-golan-idUSKBN0H60C120140911>

⁷³¹ *ibid*

⁷³² Osnat Lubrani, UN Resident Coordinator Fiji, in Perry, N. 06/09/2014. In NZ Herald https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/news/article.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=11319917

⁷³³ in Perry, N. 2014. Questions after Fiji peacekeepers captured, in New Zealand Herald, https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/news/article.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=11319917

⁷³⁴ *ibid*

Bainimarama paid tribute to the “heroic” troops who kept their cool under the “most extreme circumstances imaginable.”⁷³⁵ While families and friends and the people of Fiji are happy that none of the men was hurt, those who had watched the video of the men’s release could not miss the humiliation faced by the Fijian men as they sat on the ground under the guard of a band of Muslim terrorists. For those back home or overseas who had been victimised in the 2006 coup by the military including by some of the kidnapped officers, the incident served as a reminder to the military that “as we do to others so shall it be done to you.”⁷³⁶

Military Coups and Militarized Masculinity as Cost of Peacekeeping

The benefits of international peacekeeping for Fiji has been acknowledged in terms of international reputation and good will, government revenue, source of employment, training of youth, opportunity to travel overseas, and other socio-economic benefits that individual peacekeepers and their families have experienced.⁷³⁷ However, heavy costs have also been incurred by the nation and individual families, as a result of Fiji’s exposure to international peacekeeping. This calls for a critical examination of the paradox between “two high profile” roles that the Fiji military has involved itself in since independence: peacekeeping and perpetrating military coups.⁷³⁸

International peacekeeping commitments had escalated the size of the military far beyond the normal requirement to defend Fiji from external aggression.⁷³⁹ The escalating military size was not in response to its key defence role, but a result of both local and international catalysts following independence.⁷⁴⁰ First, it was to meet the Alliance government’s internal security policy of nation-building and second, to enhance Fiji’s status as a “good international citizen,”⁷⁴¹ both of which had brought detrimental impacts on the socio-economic and political stability of the nation.⁷⁴² Baledrokadroka admits that the exposure of Fijian soldiers in the world’s ‘trouble spots’ especially in the Middle-East, has instilled a confident political mediator mind-set among military officers,⁷⁴³ which gave them and the

⁷³⁵ Daily Mail, 12 Sept. 2014. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2753229/Fijian-peacekeepers-hailed-heroes-released-Syrian-al-Qaeda-group-captured-Israeli-border.html>

⁷³⁶ Taken from Matthew 7: 12. New International Version;

⁷³⁷ Sanday, 1998: p. 26;

⁷³⁸ Perry, N. 2014. Questions after Fiji peacekeepers captured, in New Zealand Herald, https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/news/article.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=11319917

⁷³⁹ Firth, S. 2010. Fiji at Forty, cited in Baledrokadroka, 2012: p. 107;

⁷⁴⁰ Baledrokadroka, 2012: p. 106

⁷⁴¹ *ibid*

⁷⁴² Baledrokadroka, 2013: p. 52;

⁷⁴³ Baledrokadroka, 2013, p.53

military an “inflated corporate self-image.”⁷⁴⁴ The mediator role that Fijian soldiers performed when trying to defuse communal factional conflicts as part of peacekeeping in Lebanon, had shaped their outlook and that of the RFMF as an institution.⁷⁴⁵ Through these officers, the Fiji military acquired and developed new military skills which became useful in both military and civilian spheres,⁷⁴⁶ with significant implications on domestic politics.
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As Firth affirms, peacekeeping services had accustomed Fijian military officers to the role played by military forces in imposing order and given them an understanding of military intervention in civil affairs in other parts of the world.⁷⁴⁸ Participation in peacekeeping had therefore necessitated not only a much larger Fiji military, but also required a more sophisticated one, whose officers must be in a position to work effectively with UN officials, local politicians and other defence forces.⁷⁴⁹ While the impressive list of peacekeeping missions reflected the highly sought-after peacekeeping capacity of the Fijian soldiers, these overseas operations have also provided the necessary training, professionalism and experience that would become useful in internal control at home during the coups.⁷⁵⁰ The skills and knowledge acquired by military officers in situations of armed conflicts, had boosted the confidence of the military to carry out and perpetrate military coups against unarmed politicians and civilians in Fiji as a means of solving political conflicts.

Sanday had extolled the virtues of peacekeeping for providing the means by which Fiji has been able to achieve an important foreign policy goal, which is to gain international respect and credibility as a responsible international citizen.⁷⁵¹ Baledrokadroka further recognises that by making peacekeeping the centrepiece of foreign policy, Fijian governments have unwittingly enhanced the military’s capability to intervene in domestic politics.⁷⁵² This thesis goes a step further by arguing that a gender rationale lies at the root of this foreign policy. Fiji’s commitment to global peacekeeping, clearly shows its own investment on “masculinity” as the basis of its foreign policy, and paying heavily for it through the

⁷⁴⁴ Baledrokadroka, 2012: p. 112

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid, pp. 109-110;

⁷⁴⁶ Lieutenant Colonel Lindsay Williams mentioned these in an address to the Pacific Armies Management Seminar in Honolulu in 1980, hosted by the US Pacific Command in Honolulu, as cited in Sanday, 1998, p. 34;

⁷⁴⁷ Baledrokadroka, 2013: p. 52

⁷⁴⁸ Firth, S. 2010. Fiji at Forty, cited in Baledrokadroka, 2012: p. 107;

⁷⁴⁹ Firth, S. 2010. Fiji at Forty, cited in Baledrokadroka, 2012: p. 107;

⁷⁵⁰ Ratuva, 2011, p. 100

⁷⁵¹ *ibid*

⁷⁵² Baledrokadroka, J. Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

manifestation of this hegemonic masculinity in the perpetration of military coups in Fiji. The paradox between the role of the Fiji military in 'international peacekeeping' and its capacity for internal 'peace-breaking' through the military coups, shall be examined in the next three chapters.

By outlining the factors that have shaped the evolving role of the military in national affairs, this chapter shows that the military's intervention and involvement in civilian political affairs are not the result of a sudden reaction by the military against a government that does not meet its expectations, but rather to a series of historical factors and practices that have shaped and reinforced a sense of 'entitlement' by the military to intervene in national affairs over time.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to answer the perplexing question in the militarisation of Fiji: what "enabling" factors have contributed to the interventionist role of the Fiji military in government following independence. First, it traced the origins and historical evolution of the Fiji military forces from pre-contact, to post-contact and colonial era (1830s-1874), to post-colonial and post-independence (post 1874 to post -1970). Throughout these time periods, a prevailing 'patron-client relationship' between the chiefs and warriors has persisted. A gender analysis of tribal warfare in pre-contact period revealed a division of labour in which war was the primary occupation of men, while women focused on nurturing roles in the domestic arena and played secondary support roles rather than actual combat. The origins of a modern Fiji military force began in 1861 when leading chief Ratu Cakobau formed the 'Royal Army' to support his government in the pacification of rebellious tribes and exert control over settler communities. It changed its name to Armed Native Constabulary (ANC) in 1876 and was disbanded in 1905 to merge with the Fiji Constabulary (Police). The name changed again in 1939 to Fiji Defence Force (FDF) and in 1942, the Fiji Defence Force became the Fiji Military Force (FMF) which has remained until today.

The chapter has identified a number of key factors that have shaped the Fiji military's perception of its role in national politics during the historical time phases. External influences in the early 19th century which drastically changed the nature of tribal warfare included the chiefs' exploitation of Europeans with firearms skills which resulted in the emergence of powerful *vanua* or polities. The power of Christianity also brought an end to inter-tribal and *vanua* rivalries among the leading polities, signalling the triumph of

Christianity over heathenism and the pagan practices of cannibalism, widow strangling and human sacrifices. Methodism became widely accepted as the 'lotu' of the chiefs in which religious values were compromised with cultural values to promote acceptance by the chiefs and their people. Fiji's cession marked its integration into a global plantation economy to help sustain itself as a young colony, which had prompted the recruitment of men and women from the Indian sub-continent through the 'indenture system.' The arrival of Indians in Fiji and their choice to remain in Fiji at the end of the indentured system brought long lasting social, economic and political impacts for the nation. Two key colonial policies affected racial relationship among the native Fijians and settler migrants, which included a 'protectionist' policy over the native Fijian people and the institutionalisation of "race" as a marker of difference in colonial Fiji. The 'protectionist' policy over native Fijians imposed a Fijian administration system of indirect rule which promoted a model of leadership based on the belief that political leadership was the exclusive preserve of Fijian chiefs, in particular the Polynesian-influenced eastern dynastic chiefly system.

Perhaps a lasting impact on the military's perception of its role in civilian affairs was that during the colonial era, troops were occasionally called upon to defend the colonial order in support of the authority and interests of the Fijian chiefly establishment, and to defend state structures in support of the capitalist economy against 'racially' perceived "Indian" strikes. This has reinforced the perception of the military as a Fijian institution, which took on a 'racial' or 'ethnic' bias as it was perceived as a "Fijian" tool to crush 'Indian' demands for improved labour conditions. The two world wars provided further catalysts in the expansion of the Fiji military force, while World War 2 in particular gave Fijians an opportunity to demonstrate their superior combat skills in 'jungle warfare.' The development of the Fiji military identified many parallels with the Fijian social structure including their common hierarchical structures and blind obedience to status or ranks. These parallels have reinforced the prevailing patron-client relationship between the chiefs and the military.

At independence, a process of nation-building further expanded the role and size of the Fiji Military. Eight years after independence the Fiji government offered Fijian troops to serve on UN peacekeeping missions abroad, establishing "masculinity" as the basis of Fiji's foreign policy. Despite the widely acclaimed economic benefits of peacekeeping, this thesis argues that the skills and knowledge that the peacekeepers have acquired from peacekeeping operations have been counterproductive, boosting the military's corporate

“self-image” and confidence to overthrow democratically elected governments in military coups. In post-independent Fiji, the military has preoccupied itself with two contradictory roles, global peacekeeping and local military coups. Analysing the paradox between these two preoccupations shall be the subject of the next three chapters.

It is appropriate to keep in mind the words of Professor Stewart Firth :

At independence in 1970, Fiji far outstripped all its Pacific Island neighbours in terms of economic success and administrative efficiency. Fiji could have become a Pacific version of the East Asian 'tigers' and moved rapidly into the ranks of the middle-income countries. Instead, Fiji stumbled and stumbled again, leaving its potential tragically unrealized.⁷⁵³

This chapter concludes that the intervention of the Fiji military forces through the military coups since 1987, is not the result of a sudden reaction by the military against a government that does not meet its expectations, but due rather to a series of historical factors that have reinforced a sense of entitlement by the military to intervene in national and political affairs over time.

The coups have hindered the nation’s potential to reach its full development potential in the 48 years since independence. Until such a time that the Fiji Military Force develops the maturity and professionalism to understand the role of civilian supremacy in civil military relations and to learn from the lessons of the past thirty years, the potential of Fiji as a developed nation may yet remain unfulfilled.

⁷⁵³ Firth, S. 2010. Fiji at Forty.

CHAPTER 5

A GENDER ANALYSIS OF MILITARIZATION IN FIJI:

1987 Coups to 1999 Elections

Introduction

This chapter which comprises two sections, investigates the construction of gender, specifically hegemonic and militarised masculinity and its intersection with other social identities in the militarization of Fiji during the first coup phase, between the 1987 coups and the 1999 election.

It comprises two sections: the first section applies a feminist analysis on the gendered ideology of the Fiji Military Force (FMF) as a hegemonic masculine institution that has become a source of insecurity and destabilization in Fiji ever since the first military coup in 1987.⁷⁵⁴ The transformation of the FMF is traced through its history, role, ideology and structure, and the factors which have influenced civil-military relations since independence and in particular, the role of the Fiji military in the 1987 coups. It draws on literature around civil-military concepts to help shed light on the gendered aspects of civil military relations, particularly in the emergence of a dominant manifestation of hegemonic masculinity by militarized men in the 1987 and ensuing coups. Using a masculinities perspective, this section shows how gender relations and ideologies mostly between men and intersected by race and status, reinforced a pre-coup militarization process and a patron-client relationship based on race and status, to produce a more deeply worrying process of militarization that became evident in Fiji thirty years after independence. The first section concludes by drawing out the ways in which hegemonic militarised masculinities align with indigenous cultural values, their patronage relationship with the ruling chiefly class which reinforced the role of the military in the 1987 coups, and the signs of this withering in ensuing coups. This section advances a key argument of this thesis that despite the justification of the 1987 coups to restore power to the chiefs, the coups actually became a symptom of the declining power of the Fijian chiefly elite and their institution,

⁷⁵⁴ See Teaiwa, T. 2005. *Articulated Cultures: Militarism and Masculinities in Fiji during the mid-1990s*. *Fijian Studies*, Vol. 3 (2): p. 206; Yash Ghai-led Fiji Constitution Commission Draft Constitution 2013: The Explanatory Report. 2013. S.13: Security- of the Nation and the Person, p.94;

the diminishing of its long-standing patronage relationship with the Fiji military, and its eventual dismantling following the 2006 coup.

The second section examines the gendered impact of the coups and militarisation on women and the capacity of women, as individuals and collectively as a movement, to be able to express agency through activism, mobilisation and resistance to the oppressive ramifications of the coups and militarisation. The diversity of women's experiences in the context of the 1987 coups is examined from an intersectional framework that probes the intersection of women's experiences of militarisation with their multiple identities and social positioning along the hierarchy of power differentials, such as gender, race and ethnicity, class and status, religion, age and sexuality.

I. GENDER ANALYSIS OF THE FIJI MILITARY FORCES (FMF): 1970 to 1987

Any attempt to probe the military as an institution and militarization as a process, must acknowledge the gendered ideology that shapes the military in which the theory and practice of *masculinity* serves as the ideology that legitimizes male dominance.⁷⁵⁵ A useful start to this section would be an understanding of the size, composition and evolving role of the Fiji Military Force since independence.

FMF Structure and Values

At the time of independence in 1970, the Fiji military force numbered only around 200.⁷⁵⁶ The Fijian-dominated Alliance government of founding Prime Minister and high chief Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara soon embarked on a military expansion in the 1970s geared towards meeting the government's nation-building economic and social objectives.⁷⁵⁷ Nation-building expanded the role and structure of the military through the establishment of a trade training school, a rural development unit and the RFMF naval squadron.⁷⁵⁸

The Fiji military defence unit is made up of the Land force command (army) and the Maritime command (navy). The army consists of seven infantry battalions with war fighting capability, to assist in nation building, natural disasters and emergencies, peacekeeping

⁷⁵⁵ Karamanou, A. 2007. The gender dimension in international politics. *Greek Journal of International and European Politics*, Issue 5 (April), p. 2;

⁷⁵⁶ Fraenkel, J. 2013. The origins of military autonomy in Fiji: a tale of three coups. *Australia Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 67 (3): p. 330;

⁷⁵⁷ *ibid*

⁷⁵⁸ Firth S. and Fraenkel, J. 2009. The Fiji military and ethno-nationalism: Analysing the paradox, in Firth, Fraenkel and Lal (eds). *The 2006 Military Takeover: A coup to end all coups?* Canberra: ANU E-Press, Ch. 6: pp. 118-119;

operations and a territorial force.⁷⁵⁹ The naval division is responsible for border control functions, protection of maritime sovereignty and the monitoring of Fiji's Exclusive Economic zone (EEZ).⁷⁶⁰

Prior to 2013, the vision of the Fiji military was to be a 'skilled, competent and balanced Force.'⁷⁶¹ This changed in post-2013 when it envisioned itself as "a smart military force" that enhances its capabilities through professionalism, resourcefulness, knowledge and skills, leadership, discipline and adherence to its ethos and values.⁷⁶² The changing vision reflects the changing role of the military since the 2013 Constitution of the Bainimarama regime came into being, which places the FMF as the "guardian" of Fiji by carrying out the mandate of the people through its National Administration.⁷⁶³ The FMF ethos is stated in the Fijian language, "*Na Dina, Dodonu kei na Savasava,*"⁷⁶⁴ which translates to "Truth, Justice and Integrity."⁷⁶⁵

The FMF encourages 'professionalism, determination, tenacity, physical fitness, self-confidence and controlled aggression,'⁷⁶⁶ which are clearly based on a gendered ethnic Fijian ideology of 'masculinity' or manliness at the heart of FMF training and distinct from other ethnic masculinities.⁷⁶⁷ Karamanou (2007) contends that institutions relating to security and defence are virtually exclusively men who produce norms and practices which are linked with a particular type of masculinity or manliness:

The army, naturally, is the most salient field in terms of locating hegemonic masculinity. In accordance with our patriarchal culture, a man's honor is to a large degree dependent on his ability to use violence; hence the word manliness is interwoven with fearlessness, bravery... and the use of violence.⁷⁶⁸

⁷⁵⁹ Based on year 2000 figures, see Teaiwa, T. 2005. Articulated Cultures: Militarism and Masculinities in Fiji during the mid-1990s. *Fijian Studies*, Vol. 3 (2): p.201

⁷⁶⁰ RFMF website: http://www.rfmf.mil.fj/about_us/

⁷⁶¹ See, RFMF website: http://www.rfmf.mil.fj/about_us/

⁷⁶² Ibid, RFMF website: <http://www.rfmf.mil.fj/news/About%20Us.html>

⁷⁶³ The 2013 constitution

⁷⁶⁴ RFMF website, http://www.rfmf.mil.fj/about_us/

⁷⁶⁵ *ibid*

⁷⁶⁶ <http://www.rfmf.mil.fj/news/About%20Us.html>

⁷⁶⁷ Karamanou, 2007: p. 2

⁷⁶⁸ Karamanou, A. 2003. "If Women Ruled the World", newspaper article, TA NEA, page 12;

Militaries therefore require a particular ideology of 'manliness' in order to function properly.⁷⁶⁹ Kronsell (2009) also maintains that institutions of *hegemonic masculinity* such as the military tend to represent and reify specific notions of masculinity in ways that make it the norm.⁷⁷⁰ Morgan (1994) affirms that "of all sites where masculinities are constructed, reproduced and deployed, those associated with war and the military are some of the most direct," in which

the warrior [soldier] still seems to be the key symbol of masculinity... the stance, facial expressions and the weapons clearly connote aggression, courage, a capacity for violence, and sometimes, a willingness for sacrifice.⁷⁷¹

These expressions are consistent with both the Fiji military and culturally sanctioned notions of masculinity, where a pattern of valorisation of 'hegemonic masculinity' in the military is seen to overlap with the indigenous Fijian social system.⁷⁷² Such parallel between the military hierarchy and the Fijian social structure reveals an inherently masculinist view that lacks any consideration of women or other ethnicities. A female interviewee affirms this in her observation that,

the indigenous Fijian culture, to the extent that it is so patriarchal, gets in nicely with militarization, so much so that Indo-Fijians who join the military become so Fijian in the way they talk, dress, as if they have adopted this culture.⁷⁷³

Recruitment and Training

The eligibility criteria for recruitment into the FMF indicates intersectional qualifications of gender, education, age, marital status and ability, together with health and moral standards.⁷⁷⁴ Recruitment is open to 'single' men and women, aged between 18 to 25 years, with no disabilities, sound health and physical fitness.⁷⁷⁵ Applicants must be

⁷⁶⁹ Enloe, C. 2000. *Maneuvers: the international politics of militarizing women's lives*. Berkeley: University of California Press: xiii;

⁷⁷⁰ Kronsell, A. 2005. *Gendered practices in Institutions of Hegemonic Masculinity: Reflections from a Feminist Standpoint Theory*. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 7 (2): p. 280

⁷⁷¹ Morgan, D. 1994. *Theatre of War: Combat, the Military, and Masculinities*, in Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman (eds.) *Theorizing Masculinities*. London: Sage Publishers, p.165; cited in Lopes, 2011: p. 3

⁷⁷² Sanday, 1989: p. 9

⁷⁷³ Fijian female, NGO leader, 40 yrs, 10/12/2012;

⁷⁷⁴ See for example, www.rfmf.mil.fj/recruitment/

⁷⁷⁵ *ibid*

educated up to Year 12, drug free and without criminal record in the previous 15 years,⁷⁷⁶ a time-bound criterion that clearly needs to be reviewed. They must undergo mandatory blood tests to screen out sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), hepatitis or HIV, chest x-ray, drug tests, dental and eye tests to rule out colour blindness, and must pass the mandatory physical examination by a medical officer.⁷⁷⁷

The different standards of physical fitness by gender and age tend to be based upon prevailing assumptions about gender roles and attitudes which set a higher standard of fitness for men due to their perceived body strength compared to women. Fiji's process for military recruitment can be comparable to New Zealand where minimum standards of physical fitness are also lower for females compared to men.⁷⁷⁸ The New Zealand Army however is trialling a "one standard land-combat fitness test" for everyone which monitors pass rates by gender to investigate how women are disadvantaged from men in the physical fitness test, by probing physiological differences in muscle content, haemoglobin content and lung size.⁷⁷⁹ Such scientific-fact-based standard could also be useful for Fiji.

In a recruitment drive in 2013, only seven out of the 250 new military recruits were Indo-Fijians while five had names that identified with mixed race or Pacific islanders.⁷⁸⁰ The remaining 95 percent of recruits were ethnic Fijians,⁷⁸¹ reflecting the national ethnic composition of the FMF since independence.⁷⁸² New recruits marching into camp were advised to bring personal items including a Bible and hymn book,⁷⁸³ indicating that Christianity is the dominant religion in the FMF, and Methodism in particular as identified by the 'hymn' books. The influence of the Methodist church in the military is part of a long-standing tradition since early Christian era when Methodism was accepted as the religion of the chiefs. The Methodist church currently appoints a military chaplain to administer spiritual and pastoral care for the majority of its members in the military.⁷⁸⁴

⁷⁷⁶ See, www.rfmf.mil.fj/recruitment/

⁷⁷⁷ see, www.rfmf.mil.fj/recruitment/

⁷⁷⁸ NZDF. 2014. Maximising Opportunities for Military women in the NZ Defense Force. Wellington, p. 17;

⁷⁷⁹ *ibid*, p. 18

⁷⁸⁰ Walsh, Crosbie. 30/11/2013. Ethnic Balance in the Fiji Military, in <http://crosbie.blogspot.co.nz/2013/11/ethnic-balance-in-fiji-military.html>

⁷⁸¹ *ibid*

⁷⁸² NCBBF Report, 2008. *The Role of the Fiji Military Forces*, in **Fiji: the state of the Nation and the Economy**, Chapter 3, 'Ending the Cycle of coups, p.13;

⁷⁸³ Fiji Sun, 21/01/2013; cited in Walsh, C. 2013; Ethnic Balance in the Fiji Military, in <http://crosbie.blogspot.co.nz/2013/11/ethnic-balance-in-fiji-military.html>

⁷⁸⁴ Fiji Sun, 16/01/2015. RFMF to Methodist Church over Padre's Tenure, in <http://fijisun.com.fj/2015/01/16/rfmf-to-methodist-church-over-padres-tenure/>

Military recruitment tends to target a particular notion of masculinity by enlisting physically fit, able, healthy, morally 'clean' single men and women, who are able to cope with outdoor activities and endure 'extreme' military activities. This 'image' of masculinity exudes power and endurance, so ideally fits a particular gender (masculine men), a particular ethnic group (indigenous Fijian) and religion, which is Christianity and Methodism in particular.

There have been criticisms and calls for the Fiji military to be more inclusive given the high proportion of Fijian men in the FMF.⁷⁸⁵ Naidu (1986) argues for example that,

The predominance in the army of members of one ethnic group who are closely affiliated to the chiefly hierarchy that wields political power is a matter of concern. There is something immoral and sinister about the arming and training of one ethnic category in a multi-ethnic community.⁷⁸⁶

These are genuine concerns that must be addressed through the long-term civil-military relations between the military and incoming civilian governments. In response to such ethnic-based criticisms however, Sanday points out that Indo-Fijians had the opportunity to enlist in the Fiji military during World War 2 but were so preoccupied with pay discrepancies that they became reluctant to join the military, in protest against pay discrepancies between Europeans and non-Europeans.⁷⁸⁷ The colonial government had therefore considered that Indo-Fijians were not reliable for military service as they would not be likely to give total loyalty to the war cause.⁷⁸⁸ For the 260 Indo-Fijians that did enlist in the war effort however, all served for short periods and mostly in support units.⁷⁸⁹ Ravuvu (1988) had also pointed out that in the recruitment drive for the Malayan campaign in 1951, a number of Indo-Fijian men who had volunteered were not accepted because they lacked adequate 'soldierly' qualities, that is, they lacked the 'masculine' attributes that would suit them for 'jungle warfare,' to which ethnic Fijian soldiers were adept.⁷⁹⁰ The war-time performance of Fijians in the jungles of the Solomon Islands and Bougainville had

⁷⁸⁵ Teaiwa, 2005: p.209

⁷⁸⁶ Naidu, Vijay. 1986. Militarization and Nuclearization of the Pacific: A call to strengthen the Anti-Nuclear Movement, paper presented at the University of the South Pacific's Pacific Week, 4-10 October, 1986; as cited by Teaiwa, 2005: p. 209.

⁷⁸⁷ Sanday, 1988

⁷⁸⁸ *ibid*;

⁷⁸⁹ *ibid*

⁷⁹⁰ Ravuvu, A. 1988. Fijians at War 1939-1945. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific; p.10, cited in Teaiwa, 2005: p. 210

earned accolades from their British and American counterparts, which World War 2 military historian Howlett poignantly captures:

The flower of the country's manhood was assembled and trained and then sent into conflict against a cunning and vigorous foe. They took their place and were not found wanting. They fought valiantly and met success with equanimity, adversity with fortitude, and death with honour. They lived up to the proud traditions of a warrior race and by their deeds left a heritage for the generations yet to come.⁷⁹¹

Such lavish tributes gave Fijian soldiers a perception of themselves "as the modern representatives of a warrior race," with a sense of hegemonic entitlement to the "esteem in which they [are] held by the Fijian people."⁷⁹²

The failure of the FMF to address ethnic and gender imbalance in the military remains a challenge, which can hopefully be addressed under the 'mantra' of good governance, equal citizenry and anti-racism of the 2013 constitution. The military training syllabus and policy may also need an overhaul to reflect an inclusive, gender-sensitive and human rights-based curricula considering the military's increasing role in international peacekeeping and a gradual civilianizing role for the FMF.

Joint military exercises with foreign armies

While the role of the Fiji military has evolved from active combat to the current trend of global peacekeeping, the values that underpin the criteria for Fiji military recruitment have remained rooted to the escapades of "jungle warfare." For example, a 12-week basic recruitment course aims to instil trainees with basic skills and knowledge required of a 'rifleman.'⁷⁹³ The training syllabus covers weapon handling, field craft, response to orders, battle craft, understanding range orders, leadership and attributes of a good soldier, ceremonial duties, infantry communication, navigation and medical assistance.⁷⁹⁴

⁷⁹¹ Howlett, 1948: p. 118 as cited in Firth and Fraenkel, 2009: p. 118

⁷⁹² Firth and Fraenkel, 2009: p. 118;

⁷⁹³ See for example,

<file:///D:/Ch%207%20on%202006%20coup%20to%202014%20election/RFMF%20training%20etc/more%20female%20recruitment%20rfmf.html>

⁷⁹⁴ RFMF website, 2015.

<file:///E:/Ch%205%20role%20of%20military%20in%20fiji/RFMF%20training%20et...>

Fijian soldiers have also participated in joint military exercises and training in the jungles of Viti Levu with foreign armies such as the New Zealand and Australian Defence Forces.⁷⁹⁵ In 2017, a joint training exercise in Counter Improvised Explosive Device (CIED) scenarios was conducted with the Australian Defence Force in the Nausori highlands of Viti Levu, aimed at keeping Fijian peacekeepers safe overseas.⁷⁹⁶ This was probably in response to the kidnap of 45 Fijian peacekeepers in the Golan Heights in August 2014. Joint exercises with the French military forces have normally been held at sea, as in 2016 when an infantry platoon reportedly left Fiji in the Fiji navy ship *Kula* to take part in the bi-annual multinational joint *Exercice Croix du Sud* (Exercise Southern Cross) conducted by the French Armed Forces of New Caledonia (FANC).⁷⁹⁷ The main objective of the exercise is to improve inter-operability and the training of personnel and units to conduct multi-national humanitarian assistance operations (OAH) to disasters and evacuation of non-combatants.⁷⁹⁸

Joint military exercises and the training of Fijian military personnel overseas was suspended during military coups.⁷⁹⁹ Following the 2006 coup for example, the New Zealand government announced a series of sanctions in response to the Fiji military's unlawful seizure of power to "reflect New Zealand's abhorrence of the actions taken by the Fijian military."⁸⁰⁰ As a consequence, all RFMF personnel studying, training or exercising in NZ were told to leave NZ immediately with accompanying family members.⁸⁰¹

The kidnap of 45 peacekeepers in the Golan Heights in August 2014, had raised questions about the training and preparation of Fijian peacekeepers since the 2006 coup.⁸⁰² James Brown, a military fellow at Australia's Lowy Institute and former Australian commander claimed that prior to 2006, Fijians were good soldiers:

⁷⁹⁵ Fiji Sun, 23/09/2017. 'Australian Soldiers Australia, Fijian Soldiers In Joint Training Exercise,' in, <http://fijisun.com.fj/2017/09/23/australia-fijian-soldiers-in-joint-training-exercise/>

⁷⁹⁶ Fiji Sun, 23/09/2017. 'Australian Soldiers Australia, Fijian Soldiers In Joint Training Exercise,' in, <http://fijisun.com.fj/2017/09/23/australia-fijian-soldiers-in-joint-training-exercise/>

⁷⁹⁷ Fiji Sun, 9/11/2016. 'Troops on Joint Military Exercises,' in <http://fijisun.com.fj/2016/11/09/troops-on-joint-military-exercise/>

⁷⁹⁸ *ibid*

⁷⁹⁹ New Zealand announcement, 7/12/2006. NZ imposes wide range of sanctions on Fiji, in <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/nz-imposes-wide-range-sanctions-fiji>

⁸⁰⁰ New Zealand announcement, 7/12/2006. NZ imposes wide range of sanctions on Fiji, in <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/nz-imposes-wide-range-sanctions-fiji>

⁸⁰¹ *ibid*

⁸⁰² Perry, N. 2014. Questions after Fiji peacekeepers captured, in New Zealand Herald, https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/news/article.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=11319917

Their basic military skills were pretty impressive. They did lots of training in Fiji and lots of training with us. Obviously, they lack a lot of sophisticated equipment that other militaries have. They don't have the intelligence and surveillance systems.⁸⁰³

Brown said he was not sure how well trained the Fijians have been since the 2006 coup, since they had been doing some training at a national defence university in China, which has become a close ally to Fiji since the 2006 coup.⁸⁰⁴ The troops have not trained with their Australian, New Zealand and American counterparts since 2006, when the military took control of Fiji in a coup.⁸⁰⁵

Such concerns for the training standards of the Fiji military should be heeded, as any compromise on the standards of training can be counter-productive, a cost that would be borne by the military as evident in the case of the kidnapped peacekeepers.

WOMEN IN THE FIJI MILITARY

Women were first recruited into the FMF in 1988, a year after the first coups, although Fiji women have first served in the armed forces since 1961, when twelve women enlisted with 200 Fijian men into the British army.⁸⁰⁶ The recruitment of women in 1988 was in response to the need by the FMF to restore its credibility on the international scene.⁸⁰⁷ The Defence White Paper 1997 states that women were needed to replace the men in administrative duties at the Headquarters to free the men for post-coup recovery efforts.⁸⁰⁸ A female officer who was among the first female recruits had stated, "*if you don't have women in the army, there's something wrong with the army.*"⁸⁰⁹ She was referring to global trends rooted in the liberal feminist notion of equality, which encourages the

⁸⁰³ Perry, N. 2014. Questions after Fiji peacekeepers captured, in New Zealand Herald, https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/news/article.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=11319917

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid

⁸⁰⁵ Perry, N. 2014. Questions after Fiji peacekeepers captured, in New Zealand Herald, https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/news/article.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=11319917

⁸⁰⁶ Teaiwa, T. 2015. What makes Fiji women soldiers? Context, context, context. *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, Issue 37; in <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue37/teaiwa.htm>

⁸⁰⁷ Teaiwa, T. 2008. On Women and Indians: The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion in Militarized Fiji, in Sutton, B., S. Morgen and J. Novkov (eds). *Security Disarmed: critical perspectives on gender, race and militarization*. New Brunswick: Rutgers State University Press: p.124

⁸⁰⁸ Teaiwa, 2015 in <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue37/teaiwa.htm>

⁸⁰⁹ As quoted in Teaiwa, 2008: p.124

recruitment of women into male-dominated professions such as the military.⁸¹⁰ That women's recruitment into the FMF took place a year after the first two military coups, affirmed Enloe's (2014) observation that 'militarized masculinity' is a model of masculinity that is likely to require a feminine complement.⁸¹¹

Out of the original 45 women recruits in 1988, 41 went on to successfully complete the training, with six continuing on to receive officer commissions.⁸¹² The current highest-ranking woman is a Colonel, a Fijian woman who was among the original recruits and currently holds the third ranking post in the FMF headquarters as Chief of Staff Head Quarters.⁸¹³ Women in the military however are still predominantly found in the feminine and caring roles of the logistical and service departments such as dentist, nurse, dietician, finance and accounting, which demonstrates that despite entering a male-dominated institution, traditional gender notions of femininity are still reconstructed and prevalent by relegating women to the 'peripheral, serving safely at the 'rear.'"⁸¹⁴

Teaiwa (2008) notes that initial reluctance to recruit women into the military was due not so much to bias against women, but rather to the logistical costs of providing accommodation and proper clothing.⁸¹⁵ Other gender-based concerns included the high proportion of women officers who are likely to get married including to fellow servicemen, the cost of new policies to accommodate maternity leave, and the potential challenges to the logistical and command system where wives and husbands serve under the same command.⁸¹⁶

In 2013, there were two recruitment drives to enlist 900 reserves for the territorial forces, but these did not include women.⁸¹⁷ Interim prime minister and army commander Bainimarama stated there would be no further recruitment of women except on a "need

⁸¹⁰ Herbert, Melissa. 1994. Feminism, Militarism, and Attitudes toward the role of women in the Military. *Feminist Issues*/Fall; p. 26

⁸¹¹ Enloe, C. 2014. Understanding Militarism, Militarization and the Linkages with Globalization: Using a feminist curiosity, in *Women Peacemakers Program. Gender and Militarism: Analysing the Links to Strategize for Peace*. May 24 Action Pack 2014, p. 8

⁸¹² Teaiwa, 2015

⁸¹³ HQ RFMF Command Elements, in <http://www.rfmf.mil.fj/rfmf-hq-composition/>

⁸¹⁴ Enloe, C. 1984.

⁸¹⁵ Fiji Parliament. 1997. Defense White Paper, p. 74; cited in Teaiwa, 2008, p.125

⁸¹⁶ *ibid*

⁸¹⁷ Nanise Loanakadavu, Fiji Times online. 01/02/2014. 'Men Only,' in <file:///E:/militarism%20gender%20VAW/fiji%20gender%20%20docs/Men%20only%20-%20Fiji%20Times%20Online.htm>

basis” as the allocation for women in the FMF was enough, which was 92 at the time and included nine officers and the rest as warrant officers, senior non-commission and junior officers non-commission ranks.⁸¹⁸ Two years later in 2015, a revitalized recruitment drive for women was restored in response to a requirement by the UN that ten percent (10%) of peacekeeping troops be women. An overwhelming number of around 1,000 women applied for the 100 places in the territorial force (TF).⁸¹⁹ The demand for women peacekeepers was believed to be in response to religious and cultural sensitivity in Islamic Middle Eastern countries where local women are forbidden any physical contact with a male who was not their spouse, hence women peacekeepers were needed to conduct body searches on female civilians.⁸²⁰ It is clear therefore that women’s participation as peacekeepers and their support as wives, partners or relatives of male peacekeepers, is crucial for sustaining military operations in local and global peacekeeping.⁸²¹

In January 2018, the FMF announced that its naval division would be recruiting women for the first time as part of its effort to promote gender equality,⁸²² consistent with other security services such as the army, police and corrections services.⁸²³ Over 1,200 women again applied for the 150 places to be part of the Fiji navy’s first historic female intake,⁸²⁴ with applications received from all around Fiji including the rural areas of Labasa and Lau. Altogether, 150 women between 18 and 25 years were shortlisted, with the ranks the women would hold in the navy to be determined at the completion of their training.⁸²⁵ It was also clarified that the first Fijian woman to join the navy was a commissioned officer,

⁸¹⁸Nanise Loanakadavu, Fiji Times online. 01/02/2014. ‘Men Only,’ in <file:///E:/militarism%20gender%20VAW/fiji%20gender%20%20docs/Men%20only%20-%20Fiji%20Times%20Online.htm>

⁸¹⁹ Dateline Pacific, Radio NZ. 25 March 2015. ‘Around 1,000 women apply to join Fiji Military,’ see, <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/programmes/datelinepacific/audio/20172239/around-1000-women-apply-to-join-fiji-military>

⁸²⁰ Ali, M. 8/3/2018. I’ll greet you my way so please don’t give me a hand, in <https://www.stuff.co.nz/auckland/local-news/western-leader/102090630/mahvash-ali-ill-greet-you-my-way-so-please-dont-give-me-a-hand>

⁸²¹ Dateline Pacific, Radio NZ. 25 March 2015. ‘Around 1,000 women apply to join Fiji Military,’ see, <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/programmes/datelinepacific/audio/20172239/around-1000-women-apply-to-join-fiji-military>

⁸²² Fiji Sun, 9/1/2018. See, <http://fijisun.com.fj/2018/01/09/navy-to-recruit-women/>

⁸²³ Radio New Zealand. 2/2/2018. Fiji Navy says 1200 women apply for historic first intake, in <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/349502/fiji-navy-says-1200-women-apply-for-historic-first-intake>

⁸²⁴ *ibid*

⁸²⁵ *ibid*

who was among the original women recruits and became a lawyer specialising in maritime law.

It took seven years since women first enlisted in the Fiji military before they were deployed on peacekeeping missions in 1995 to the United Nations Assisted Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).⁸²⁶ The Defence White Paper 1997 offered various reasons for the delay in deployment:

Until 1995 servicewomen were not sent...overseas. This was not because they had no value there but because of the element of operational danger involved. Further, servicewomen in such employment being vastly outnumbered by men of many nationalities, tend to be subjected to continued sexual pressure.⁸²⁷

A stereotypical gendered and patronising attitude of “protectiveness” over women’s “safety” and hence “sexuality,” was used as an excuse for restricting women at home due to exaggerated concerns over the “element of operational danger,” and the risk of “sexual pressure” by men of other nationalities. Nikos Tzifakis (2004) aptly notes that,

the traditional approach to “safety” reproduces patriarchal power relations and legitimizes the creation of militarized organizations where, not only are the acceptable roles available to women limited, but male models of behavior are dominant which expose women to the risk of mistreatment.⁸²⁸

Yet, it was probably not from men in other militaries but their own that women in the Fiji military needed ‘protection’ from, according to anecdotal accounts shared by some interviewees that hinted at some senior military officers leaving their wives for the younger women recruits, while allegations of sexual misconduct by senior military officers on peacekeeping missions abroad⁸²⁹ may have contributed to female officers being stopped from peacekeeping deployment in 2007.

⁸²⁶ Radio New Zealand. 2/2/2018. Fiji Navy says 1200 women apply for historic first intake, in <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/349502/fiji-navy-says-1200-women-apply-for-historic-first-intake>

⁸²⁷Quoted in Teaiwa, 2008:126

⁸²⁸Tzifakis, N. 2004. The Construction of Security in International Relations. *Market without Borders, Vol10, (2), Sept. Oct. Nov.; cited in Karamanou, 2007, p.2*

⁸²⁹ Fijian woman in her 50s, wife of former military officer/peacekeeper in ‘*Talanoa*’ session, 30/12/2014;

Furthermore, the inclusion of women in the Fiji military posed added strain to a military family's relationship, according to the wife of a former military officer who states,

when women joined the army, it created another level of risk for us (wives) due to their (men's) long absence on peacekeeping missions. I mean, they (husbands) are only human.⁸³⁰

This concern creates a double bind when men's sexuality is cast alongside that of the women recruits, which becomes problematic for military wives seeing the great sacrifice they have made to help sustain the military and the global peacekeeping operations that sustains a war machinery.

This also speaks to the broader issues of how militaries are created, sustained, and deployed. Women were initially recruited to replace the men who were needed for post-1987 coup rehabilitation, and to meet global peacekeeping demand. The massive response of 1,000 female applicants for only 100 hundred places, testifies to the impact of global militarization on local economic conditions and says more about the job prospects and financial stability that the military offers, than it does about young females' support for militaristic values.⁸³¹ Yet, as Enloe reminds us, where a 'militarized masculinity' exists, it is likely to require a feminine complement to validate it,⁸³² which was evident when women were recruited into the Fiji military only a year after the 1987 coup. This does not diminish however, the supportive role that women already play as wives, girlfriends, mothers, sisters or female relatives, and which remains an important source of ideological legitimation and emotional support for military men.⁸³³

While the role of women in the military has increasingly been scrutinised by feminists,⁸³⁴ and being mindful of contextual differences between the position and role of women in the Swedish military compared to women in the Fiji military, who are still concentrated in the lower ranks and "care" services, this thesis agrees with Kronsell that vital knowledge about gendered relations can be gained about the military as an institution of hegemonic

⁸³⁰ Fijian woman in her 50s, wife of former military officer/peacekeeper in 'Talanoa' session, 30/12/2014;

⁸³¹ Enloe, C. 1988. Does Khaki become you? The Militarization of women's lives. London: Pluto Press; p. 43

⁸³² Enloe, 2014; p.8

⁸³³ Cock, J. 1989. Keeping the Fire Burning: Militarisation and Gender in South Africa. Review of African Political Economy, No. 45/46: p. 55

⁸³⁴ Cock, 1989; Enloe, 1984; 1988, 2000; Cockburn, 2010; Kaplan, 1994;

masculinity, by listening to the ‘voices’ of women who engage in its daily practice.⁸³⁵ This study had avoided talking directly to women currently serving in the Fiji military or married to current military officers, to avoid undue pressure on them or their families. It notes however that if the recruitment of women into the FMF contributes in some measure to the “feminization” of the military and ultimately to “civilianizing” the military, then these should be regarded as positive transformative signs for the masculinist military.

Cadet training in schools

The FMF has a long tradition of being involved in the cadet training scheme in secondary schools such as Queen Victoria School (QVS), Rabuka’s old school. The training involves imparting “militarised” values of discipline to strengthen character and enable students to address social issues.⁸³⁶ This issue shall be analysed further in Chapter 8, in view of the responses of women interviewees to what they perceive as the increasing militarisation of young people through the cadet training scheme in schools, particularly following the 2006 coup.

Global Peacekeeping: Masculinity as Foreign Policy

The claim that Fiji has taken part in more peacekeeping operations and sent more soldiers on peacekeeping missions than any other nation in the world per capita,⁸³⁷ gives rise to what this study asserts as Fiji’s overwhelming investment in militarised “masculinity” as a major foreign policy. The accolades and reputation gained by the Fiji military in the second World War and in the Malayan campaign and for which their services were sought after by the British Army in the early 1960s, also influenced the decision by the leaders after independence to offer troops to the UN peacekeeping missions. Hence the assertion by this study that the Fiji government invested in ‘masculinity’ as a foreign policy, through global peacekeeping.

Peacekeeping as a huge source of government revenue (and expenditure), contributes to soldiers’ personal and economic advancement, and enhances Fiji’s global reputation in world peace through multilateral engagements and diplomacy.

⁸³⁵ Kronsell, A. 2005. Gendered Practices in institutions of hegemonic masculinity. *International Journal of Feminist Politics*, 7 (2): p. 280

⁸³⁶ Meli Tavaga. Fiji village news, 13/07/2015. Cadet training may soon be implemented in all schools,’ in <http://fijivillage.com/news/cadet-training-may-soon-be-implemented-in-all-schools-k92s5r>

⁸³⁷ Andrew Roberts, 2006, cited in Baledrokadroka, 2012: p.105;

It is hardly surprising therefore that Fiji's participation in international peacekeeping has been the key driver in the expansion of the Fiji Military Force after independence. Since Fiji's first deployment in 1978, the force has grown from 800 to 1,300 following the provision of a light battalion of 500 men for the UNIFIL mission in Lebanon, with a further 500 recruited for the second infantry regiment (2FIR) to Sinai in 1982, further increasing the military to 1,800.⁸³⁸ Additional requests from the UN pushed the number up to 2,200 in 1986. The 1987 coup however, brought a permanent change in the role of the RFMF in Fiji's political life, when the size trebled to 6,600, including reservists in the Territorial Forces,⁸³⁹ which, reduced the number to 3,600 upon demobilisation in December 1988.⁸⁴⁰ By 1996, the number had fallen to 3,571 and the downward trend continued.⁸⁴¹ In May 2008, ten years after the first females were recruited, the FMF had a strength of 3,095 members out of a budgeted capacity of 3,257 force, with only 57 or one percent women.⁸⁴² Despite increased recruitment from 1978 onwards, the ethnic composition of the Fiji military has remained at a steady level of 95 percent indigenous Fijian men since independence.⁸⁴³

Fiji's current troops' commitment in global peacekeeping missions stand at 826,⁸⁴⁴ which includes 301 under UNDOF in Syria, 5 in South Sudan with UNMISS, 203 with the MFO in Egypt/Sinai, 168 in Iraq with UNAMI, 146 with UNIFIL in Lebanon, and 3 with the UN Truce Supervision Organisation in Jerusalem.⁸⁴⁵ As at 28 February 2018, Fiji ranked 36th out of 123 troops-contributing countries in peacekeeping, with 655 personnel on peacekeeping missions, made up of police, UN military experts, staff officers and troops, with a gender make-up of 604 men and 51 women, who make up 8 percent of Fiji's total peacekeeping force.⁸⁴⁶

⁸³⁸ *ibid*

⁸³⁹ Firth and Fraenkel, 2009: p. 120

⁸⁴⁰ *ibid*: p.119;

⁸⁴¹ Firth and Fraenkel, 2009: p. 120

⁸⁴² NCBBF Report, 2008. *The Role of the Fiji Military Forces*, in **Fiji: the state of the Nation and the Economy**, Chapter 3, 'Ending the Cycle of coups, p.13; see also Ratuva, S. 2010. The Military and Politics in Fiji, in 'Fiji at Forty' conference. ANU, Canberra, (October 10, 2010) to mark Fiji's Fortieth Independence anniversary;

⁸⁴³ Ratuva, 2011: p.99;

⁸⁴⁴ RFMF website, <http://www.rfmf.mil.fj/fiji-peacekeeping-mission/>

⁸⁴⁵ RFMF website, <http://www.rfmf.mil.fj/fiji-peacekeeping-mission/>

⁸⁴⁶ Summary of Troop contributing countries by Ranking, 28/02/2018, in https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/2_country_ranking_report.pdf

Impact of Fiji Peacekeeping

Peacekeeping has been a motivating factor for joining the military, generating employment and a steady source of income for hundreds of youths freshly out of high school.⁸⁴⁷ For ordinary Fijian soldiers, the FMF plays the role of a 'new *vanua*' and offers lucrative salaries for those "who might otherwise be trapped in their villages or be part of the urban and peri-urban unemployed."⁸⁴⁸ As Fraenkel and Firth note, in over 22 years of UNIFIL deployment since 1978, south Lebanon was temporarily home to thousands of Fijian soldiers.⁸⁴⁹ A Fijian man whose nephew had joined the army insists, "[I]t's a job.... it's better than being without a job and get caught on the wrong side of the law and with the wrong crowd and, most importantly, penniless."⁸⁵⁰ Former FMF Commander Tikoitoga acknowledges that peacekeeping is an inevitable choice,

our economy has no choice but to build armies, and it's a good business. There are few other foreign investments. If we didn't do this, our people would be in the street creating havoc.⁸⁵¹

In July 2013, the Fiji Cabinet approved further military recruitment in addition to the 1,200 personnel already on peacekeeping missions in Iraq, Sinai and the Golan Heights.⁸⁵² Tikoitoga affirmed that the increased recruitment was not only to replace those in the Golan Heights but to keep the soldiers' numbers at a reasonable level where they can be rotated to sustain Fiji's commitment to peace keeping missions, seeing they were already feeling the pinch in demand.⁸⁵³

Like most developing countries, a primary motive for Fiji's offer of troops for peacekeeping is the economic benefit for individual peacekeepers and as a source of revenue for the government.⁸⁵⁴ It is estimated that in the first 30 years since 1978, over 30,000 Fijian

⁸⁴⁷ Fiji Peacekeeping Veterans group, Submission to the Constitution Commission, 13/10/2012;

⁸⁴⁸ Fraenkel and Firth, 2009: p. 132

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 119;

⁸⁵⁰ Matt Siegel. 4/09/2014. World News, 'For Fiji's military rulers, UN peacekeeping a useful mask.' In [HTTPS://WWW.REUTERS.COM/ARTICLE/US-FIJI-UN-CRISIS-IDUSKBN0GZ0GV20140904](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-fiji-un-crisis-iduskbn0gz0gv20140904)

⁸⁵¹ Fraenkel and Firth, 2009: p.121

⁸⁵² Roland Koroi. FBC news, 10/7/2013. Cabinet approves military recruitment drives, in <http://www.fbc.com.fj/fiji/11865/cabinet-approves-military-recruitment-drives>

⁸⁵³ Roland Koroi. FBC news, 10/7/2013. Cabinet approves military recruitment drives, in <http://www.fbc.com.fj/fiji/11865/cabinet-approves-military-recruitment-drives>

⁸⁵⁴ Burrows, I. 2014. Fijian UN peacekeepers: Cash, experience a lure although fears remain following abductions in Syria, in <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-09-02/cash,-experience-a-boon-for-fijian-un-peacekeepers/5714222>

soldiers on overseas peacekeeping missions have brought home an estimated US\$300 million.⁸⁵⁵ There are further indications that total remittances from Fijians working overseas are worth more than traditional sectors like sugar and manufacturing.⁸⁵⁶

In a research on three troop-contributing countries in Asia, Murthy notes that the financial gain for individuals is substantial and attractive, as subsistence and other allowances of around US\$1,000 a month that an officer or a person below the rank of officer gets, are much higher than the salary in their country of origin.⁸⁵⁷ This is a fact in a developing country like Fiji, where the UN currently reimburses individual peacekeepers at a very lucrative rate of just over F\$1,235 per month, particularly since the Bainimarama government has given Fijian soldiers the full reimbursement rate, compared to previous governments that used to pocket a portion of the reimbursement rate.⁸⁵⁸ Former peacekeepers alleged that for 25 years, the government and the Fiji military Forces had pocketed a large portion of their allowances, which became the subject of a High court case in 2012, ('State versus the Fiji Peacekeeping Veterans').⁸⁵⁹ The wife of a former peacekeeper had also affirmed that her son who is a current soldier/peacekeeper receives much more now compared to what her husband (his father) used to get as a peacekeeper twenty years ago.⁸⁶⁰

Former military wives have highlighted the economic benefits of their husbands or sons participating in peacekeeping, since money earned from a tour of peacekeeping enabled them to build or buy homes and cars, travel overseas and increase their purchasing power.⁸⁶¹ Such benefits would not have been possible had their husbands remained in a civil service job in Fiji.⁸⁶²

Fijians have earned a great reputation from international peacekeeping. A report from East Timor noted that Timorese people still held fond memories of Fijian peacekeepers who

⁸⁵⁵ Fraenkel and Firth, 2009: p. 119

⁸⁵⁶ *ibid*

⁸⁵⁷ Murthy, C.S. 2007. Unintended consequences of peace operations for troop-contributing countries from South Asia, in Aori, C., de Coning, C. and Ramesh Thakur (eds). Unintended consequences of peacekeeping operations. Tokyo, New York, Paris: United Nations University Press, Ch. 8, p. 162;

⁸⁵⁸ Burrows, 2014; <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-09-02/cash,-experience-a-boon-for-fijian-un-peacekeepers/5714222>

⁸⁵⁹ Fiji Peacekeeping Veterans Group submission to the CRC, 13/10/2012;

⁸⁶⁰ Fijian female, 60s, retired civil servant, July 2017;

⁸⁶¹ Two Fijian women interviewees, 60s and mid-50s, 26/12/2014;

⁸⁶² *ibid*

served under INTERFET between 2000 and 2005.⁸⁶³ Peacekeeping reinforced Fiji's heroic tradition, bringing international goodwill and a great reputation for exemplary service.⁸⁶⁴

Baledrokadroka notes that,

international peacekeeping exposure to the world's hot spots especially the Middle East has imbued a confident political mediator disposition amongst Fiji's military officers. Rubbing shoulders with big name politicians, UN officials and Middle East factional leaders of the P.L.O.⁸⁶⁵ and Hezbollah was all part of a Fijian senior officer's lot during a tour of duty.⁸⁶⁶

Many interviewees suggest that a cost and benefit analysis of peacekeeping for Fiji is long overdue, as there are social and development costs that must be balanced against the economic benefits. A total of 56 peacekeepers have lost their lives in the various operations, 37 alone during the UNIFIL operation in Lebanon between 1978 and 2002, the highest count for any troop-contributing country.⁸⁶⁷ Hundreds more were injured and their families are still crying out for compensation.⁸⁶⁸ Women were forced to take on breadwinner and/or caring roles for the sick, injured and disabled.⁸⁶⁹ It is therefore critical that women are involved in policy discussions prior to deployment on global peacekeeping so they are better prepared for potential negative consequences that may arise from peacekeeping.

There is no doubt that peacekeeping has generated greater masculinization and militarization at all levels of Fijian society, and the continued marginalization of women.⁸⁷⁰ A hidden cost of peacekeeping that this study has gathered from probing the impact of militarisation, is the burden of violence borne by women as a consequence of peacekeeping, which is discussed further in Chapter 7.

⁸⁶³ Fiji Sun, 01.06.2017. Timorese hold fond memories of Fijian Peacekeepers, in <http://fijisun.com.fj/2017/06/01/timorese-hold-fond-memories-of-fijian-peacekeepers/>

⁸⁶⁴ *ibid*

⁸⁶⁵ Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) was headed by Yasser Arafat until his death in November 2004.

⁸⁶⁶ Baledrokadroka, J. 2010. The Military in Post-Colonial Fiji, in Hegarty, D. and D. Tryon. (eds.). *Politics, Development and Security in Oceania*, Chapter 3. Canberra: ANU, p. 53

⁸⁶⁷ Fiji Peacekeeping Veterans Association submission to Constitution Review Commission (CRC), 13 Oct. 2012;

⁸⁶⁸ Fiji Peacekeeping Veterans Association submission to Constitution Review Commission (CRC), 13 Oct. 2012;

⁸⁶⁹ *ibid*

⁸⁷⁰ Enloe, C. 2005. *Masculinity as Foreign Policy Issue*. Institute for Policy Studies, in http://www.ips-dc.org/masculinity_as_foreign_policy_issue/

Changing constitutional role of Fiji Military: 1970-1999

The role, functions and structure of the Fiji military have undergone significant changes since the first coups, seeing that every coup has produced a new legal and constitutional order.⁸⁷¹ The 1970 Constitution did not specifically cover the military which continued to come under the 1949 FMF Act, and charges the Fiji Military Force with the defence of Fiji and the maintenance of order.⁸⁷² The military came under the supreme command of the Governor General,⁸⁷³ who may order deployment outside of Fiji upon the advice of the Minister and to disband or discontinue the services of the Force.⁸⁷⁴ The 1987 coups threw out the 1970 constitution and replaced it with the 1990 constitution, which specifies the role of the FMF “to ensure at all times the security, defence and wellbeing of Fiji and its people.”⁸⁷⁵ The FMF came under a Commander to be appointed by the President,⁸⁷⁶ (who had replaced the Governor General following Rabuka’s second coup in September 1987), on the advice of the Prime Minister for a renewable term of five years.⁸⁷⁷

Between 1995 and 1996, the Rabuka government paved the way towards a credible democratic process by establishing a Constitutional Review Commission (CRC)⁸⁷⁸ that was tasked with gathering country-wide submissions for a new constitution. For the first time, the people of Fiji had an opportunity to genuinely participate in the creation of a new constitution.⁸⁷⁹ The outcome was the 1997 constitution, which was endorsed by Parliament in July 1997 to become Fiji’s third constitution since independence.⁸⁸⁰ It recognises the continued existence of the FMF as established under the 1990 constitution,⁸⁸¹ where the

⁸⁷¹ The Fiji Independence Order 1970 included the instruments of independence and Fiji’s 1970 Constitution.

⁸⁷² S (3) FMF Act 1949 was a key piece of legislation that was retained in the new Fiji independence order; see also, Wilson, S. 2011. *Coup Culture: the military and failure of constitutionalism in Fiji*. VUWLR, 42: 589-614; p. 595

⁸⁷³ Following Rabuka’s second coup on 25 September, 1987, he declared Fiji a Republic on 7 October, and appointed the former Governor General, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau as Fiji’s first President in December 1987.

⁸⁷⁴ s (16) FMF Act 1949; see Wilson, p. 595

⁸⁷⁵ Wilson, p. 595; as reflected in the 1949 FMF Act;

⁸⁷⁶ The President replaced the Governor General after Rabuka’s second coup in Sept 1987;

⁸⁷⁷ Wilson, 2011: p. 595

⁸⁷⁸ The 3-member CRC also known as the Reeves Commission, comprised former NZ Governor General Sir Paul Reeves of Maori descent, former Alliance Cabinet Minister and Alliance nominee Tomasi Vakatora an ethnic Fijian, and renowned academic and NFP nominee, Dr Brij Lal of Indo-Fijian descent;

⁸⁷⁹ Reeves, Sir P., Vakatora, T. and Lal, Brij V. 1996. *The Fiji Islands: towards a united future: a report of the Fiji Constitutional Review Commission 1996*. Suva: Government Printer.

⁸⁸⁰ 1997 Constitution, s 112 (1) to (4);

⁸⁸¹ *ibid*

President appoints a Commander on the advice of the Minister to exercise executive command of the FMF, subject to the control of the Minister, and the role of Parliament to make laws relating to the FMF.⁸⁸² This was the existing guideline for civil military relations in the lead up to the 2006 military coup.

The overthrow of the SDL government on December 5, 2006 by army commander Bainimarama, issued fresh constitutional challenges on the role of the military in an evolving democracy. In January 2007, Bainimarama was appointed interim prime minister in a post-coup regime while he remained military commander, “with the full support of a visibly ailing and curiously ineffectual President, who was totally controlled by and beholden to the military.”⁸⁸³ This was a very critical development that signified the diminishing role of the chiefly institution which had previously appointed the President as Commander in chief of the military and held patronage over the military, but who was now totally beholden to the military as a consequence of the coups.

A series of challenges in the High Court of Fiji by the former Qarase government followed,⁸⁸⁴ with mixed outcomes beginning on 9 October 2008, when a three-member High Court panel of Judges led by regime-appointed Acting Chief Justice Anthony Gates, ruled that the President’s actions in appointing an interim cabinet in January 2007, and in continuing to rule by decree in the wake of Fiji’s December 2006 coup, “were valid and are held to be lawful.”⁸⁸⁵ The High Court decision effectively legitimised the post-coup interim order,⁸⁸⁶ and reinforced what has now become a deeply entrenched “coup culture” in Fiji through the collusion of the military, elements in the judiciary and legal profession and the office of the President.

A further appeal by the Qarase team to the Fiji Court of Appeal successfully ruled on April 9, 2009 that, contrary to the earlier declaration by the High Court, the ‘reserved powers’ of the President did not exist and that the post-coup military regime of Bainimarama was

⁸⁸²1997 Constitution, s 112 (1) to (4);

⁸⁸³ Brij Lal. 2007. ‘Anxiety, Uncertainty, and Fear in Our Land’: Fiji’s Road to Military Coup, 2006. *The Round Table* Vol. 96, No. 389, p. 136

⁸⁸⁴ ANU College of Asia and the Pacific, ANU. 21/10/2008. Courts and Coups: Fiji's October 2008 High Court Judgment in the Qarase Vs Bainimarama Case, in <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/news-events/podcasts/courts-and-coups-fijis-october-2008-high-court-judgment-qarase-vs-bainimarama#.WpUyi6iWbIU>

⁸⁸⁵ ANU College of Asia and the Pacific, ANU. 21/10/2008. Courts and Coups: Fiji's October 2008 High Court Judgment in the Qarase Vs Bainimarama Case, in <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/news-events/podcasts/courts-and-coups-fijis-october-2008-high-court-judgment-qarase-vs-bainimarama#.WpUyi6iWbIU>

⁸⁸⁶ ANU College of Asia and the Pacific, ANU. 21/10/2008;

“unlawfully instituted,” and should give way to a legally instituted government through fresh elections.⁸⁸⁷ The court of appeal decision was a slap in the face and dent in the ego of Bainimarama and the military, placing their hegemonic masculine status in a limbo. To give up power and follow the court order would make them look weak and lose face in public, especially among opponents. To avoid the embarrassment, the vacillating President colluded with the coup perpetrators to abrogate the 1997 constitution, sack the judges and declare a new legal order of ‘rule by decrees’ for Fiji.⁸⁸⁸

The Bainimarama military regime then instituted a new initiative known as the ‘People’s Charter for building a better Fiji,’⁸⁸⁹ through the appointment of a 43-member National Council for Building a Better Fiji (NCBBF) drawn from a wide membership of government and civil society to give some semblance of participation and involvement under the mantra of “moving Fiji forward.”⁸⁹⁰ To give legitimacy to the Charter initiative, Bainimarama appointed the head of the Roman Catholic Church in Fiji, Archbishop Petero Mataka, and himself as interim Prime Minister, as co-Chairs of the Council (NCBBF).⁸⁹¹ Among priority issues highlighted as key to building a better Fiji, was “ending the coup culture,” achievable through fourteen principles, one of which was the need to ‘redefine and clarify the role of the military to ensure it is committed to defending the constitution and to realign its role to include human security.’⁸⁹² As Baledrokadroka notes, this marked a new constitutional role for the FMF in which its “hard security role becomes merged with a politically nuanced human security role.”⁸⁹³

The Charter also paved the way for a new constitutional order in 2012 through a newly appointed Constitution Review Commission (CRC) led by Kenyan constitutional expert

⁸⁸⁷ Court of Appeal Civil Action between Laisenia Qarase & others, 6-8 April 2009, in <http://www.fijitimes.com/extras/Qarase-vs-Bainimarama-Court-of-appeal-judgement.pdf>;

⁸⁸⁸ Fraenkel and Firth, 2009: p.

⁸⁸⁹The charter’s goal aims to ‘rebuild Fiji into a non-racial, culturally vibrant and united, well-governed truly democratic nation that seeks progress and prosperity through merit-based equality of opportunity and peace.’ (People’s Charter), 2008. See for example, Lal, B. V. 2009. One hand clapping: Reflections on the first anniversary of Fiji’s 2006 coup, in Fraenkel, J., Firth, S. and Lal, B.V. (eds.) 2009. The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: A coup to end all coups?” Canberra: ANU E-Press, p. 426

⁸⁹⁰ National Council for building a better Fiji (NCBBF), December 15, 2008. People’s Charter for Change, Peace and Progress. Members of the Council were drawn from civil society, government departments and military officers.

⁸⁹¹ *ibid*

⁸⁹² NCBBF, 2008. People’s Charter, pp 14-15;

⁸⁹³ Baledrokadroka, J. 2010. The Military in Postcolonial Fiji. Paper presented at ‘Fiji at Forty’ to mark Independence Day, 10 October. ANU, Canberra.

Professor Yash Ghai.⁸⁹⁴ The Ghai Commission received around 7,000 submissions from throughout Fiji, about a third (30 percent) of these from women.⁸⁹⁵ The Ghai draft constitution was submitted to the President towards the end of 2012, and was very explicit in considering the context and impact of the coups on the people and society as a whole.⁸⁹⁶ The explanatory notes stressed that the role of the Fiji military is to protect the country from external threats and that it should remain under civilian control through an elected parliament.⁸⁹⁷ In a show of hegemonic masculinity however, the Bainimarama regime threw out the Ghai draft constitution in early 2013, and proceeded to draw up its own 2013 Constitution, which has been criticised for lacking legitimacy and credibility due to limited public participation.⁸⁹⁸

The 2013 constitution, Fiji's fourth since independence, expanded on the role of the military to "ensure at all times the security, defence and wellbeing of Fiji and all Fijians."⁸⁹⁹ According to the FMF website, the 'intent' of the FMF is to "remain as the custodian of Fiji's constitution,"⁹⁰⁰ which affirmed Sanday's prediction following the 1987 coup that,

...a politicised role for the military appears assured. The military will see themselves as protectors of the new Constitution and the values enshrined therein...a perception that they are the legitimate upholders of the Constitution, that is, the success or otherwise of the Constitution is the responsibility of the military.⁹⁰¹

The 2013 constitution provides that the Commander of the FMF is appointed by the President on the advice of the Constitutional Offices Commission (COC), following consultation with the Minister responsible for the FMF.⁹⁰² This is a major diversion from previous constitutions, since the COC is stacked with political appointees of the Prime

⁸⁹⁴ The Constitution Commission was appointed in July 2012 to prepare a Draft Constitution for Fiji. The members of the Commission were: International members, Yash Ghai (Chair) and Christina Murray; and locals Peni Moore, Satendra Nandan and Taufa Vakatale.

⁸⁹⁵ Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM). Annual Report January 2012-June 2013, p. 4

⁸⁹⁶ Fiji Constitution Review Commission (FCRC). August 2012. Building the People's Constitution: Your responsibility. Suva.

⁸⁹⁷ The Constitution Commission. Dec.2012. Draft Constitution: The Explanatory Report. Suva: pp 94-96;

⁸⁹⁸ Radio New Zealand. 11/01/2013. Little surprise over Fiji regime dumping constitution draft, in <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/209573/little-surprise-over-fiji-regime-dumping-constitution-draft>

⁸⁹⁹ Fiji Constitution. 2013. Republic of Fiji Military Forces. S. 131 (1)- (4), p. 71

⁹⁰⁰ See http://www.rfmf.mil.fj/about_us/

⁹⁰¹ Sanday, 1989: p.18;

⁹⁰² Sanday, 1989: p.18;

Minister who serves as Chair, the Attorney General, plus two other nominees of the prime minister, and a token seat for the Leader of the Opposition and one nominee.⁹⁰³ The current trend of the politicisation of the military will likely continue under the 2013 constitution.

Civil-Military relations: 1970-1987

The term 'civil-military relations' (CMR) refers to the relationship between civilian society as represented by the state, and the military, the organization responsible for the protection and defence of the state and its citizens against external threats.

Saffu (1990) observes that two patterns of civil-military relations existed in Fiji between independence and the first military coup in May 1987, a "traditional aristocratic" and a "liberal democratic" pattern.⁹⁰⁴ In the 'traditional aristocratic' pattern, the basis of civilian supremacy is the harmony of social and political outlooks between politicians and military officers in pre-democratic political systems.⁹⁰⁵ Members of the political branch of aristocratic families are accepted as politically legitimate by the military and church branches of the same network of aristocratic families.⁹⁰⁶ Civil-military relations are thus "cosy, intra-family affairs."⁹⁰⁷ In the 'liberal democratic' pattern, civilian supremacy rests on two beliefs: the 'democratic' belief that civilian politicians have an electoral mandate to rule, and the 'liberal' view that all major institutions under the constitution has its own sphere of jurisdiction and relative autonomy, that is, a clear separation of powers, demarcated by constitutional provisions, conventions and procedures.⁹⁰⁸ Both patterns of civil-military relations existed in Fiji under civilian supremacy, until the general elections of April 1987.

When Ratu Mara's ruling Alliance Party which had been in power since 1966, was defeated in April 1987, the foundation for 'traditional aristocratic' pattern of civilian supremacy was crushed.⁹⁰⁹ The loss and the military coup that followed, altered forever the course of civil-military relations in Fiji, marking the beginning of a historical course where the principle of

⁹⁰³ 2013 Fiji constitution, s. 132, Part C. Constitutional Offices Commission, p. 71

⁹⁰⁴ Saffu, Yaw. 1990. Changing Civil-Military Relations in Fiji. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 44 (2); p.159

⁹⁰⁵ Saffu, 1990: p. 159;

⁹⁰⁶ Saffu, 1990: p. 159;

⁹⁰⁷ *ibid*

⁹⁰⁸ *ibid*

⁹⁰⁹ Saffu, 1990: p. 159;

civilian supremacy would constantly be challenged by the Fiji military. Ever since Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka broke open '*Pandora's box*' of coups and its associated evils in May 1987, he unknowingly began the process of what, three decades later would place the Fiji military force firmly as an "all pervasive institution of politics."⁹¹⁰

Principle of Civilian supremacy

Samuel Finer (1962), one of the early exponents on the role of the military in politics, stated almost half a century ago that all armed forces that have become politicized tend to hold the belief that they have some special and unique identification with the 'national interest' and therefore see themselves as the saviour of their nations.⁹¹¹ Finer contends that in order not to intervene in political affairs, the military must believe in the democratic principle of 'civilian supremacy'.⁹¹² Civilian supremacy is a key feature of civil-military relations in mature liberal democracies such as Australia and New Zealand, or the United Kingdom and the United States, which acknowledges civilian power as paramount. This means that the major policies and programmes of government are best left to the nation's civilian political leaders.⁹¹³

While mindful of contextual differences between mature western democracies and evolving third-world democracies such as Fiji, when faced with a conflict situation, some militaries have tended to make a distinction between what they perceive as 'national interest' versus 'civilian authority.' US World War Two hero, General Douglas MacArthur for example, had made this point in the infamous 1951 Korean war controversy against US President Truman when he said,

I find in existence a new and heretofore unknown and dangerous concept: that the members of our armed forces owe primary allegiance or loyalty to those who temporarily exercise the authority of the Executive branch of government, rather than to the country and its constitution which they are sworn to defend.⁹¹⁴

⁹¹⁰ Baledrokadroka, J. 2010. The Military in Postcolonial Fiji. Paper presented at 'Fiji at Forty' to mark Independence Day, 10 October. ANU, Canberra.

⁹¹¹ Finer, S. 1962. *The Man on Horseback: the role of the military in politics*. London: Pall Mall Press; p. 32, 35;

⁹¹² Finer, p. 25

⁹¹³ Sapin, B. and R. Snyder. 1954. *The role of the military in American foreign policy*. New York; p. 52, cited in Finer, p. 28

⁹¹⁴ Cited in Finer, p. 26

By seeing themselves as specialists in their field, military officers often feel justified that they alone have the competence to decide on military matters, thus creating a potential source of tension between the military and the civilian government.⁹¹⁵ In contrast to MacArthur who favoured military control of civilian politics, General Bradley a former chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff had stated that, “economically, politically and militarily, the control of our country resides with civilian executive and legislative agencies.”⁹¹⁶ President John F. Kennedy made a similar statement to the US Congress in 1961:

Our arms must be subject to ultimate civilian control at all times. The basic decisions on our participation in any conflict and our response to any threat ...will be made by regularly constituted civilian authorities.⁹¹⁷

When MacArthur was relieved of his role as Supreme Commander of the US Forces in 1951 because he was no longer able “to give his wholehearted support to the policies of the United States,” civilian control of the military faced its severest test in US history.⁹¹⁸ Eleven years later, while delivering a last farewell at his former military academy at West Point, MacArthur himself gave stern advice to future officers, that in the high political affairs of the country they were duty-bound not to meddle.⁹¹⁹ When MacArthur told future officers that “these great national problems are not for your professional or military solution,” he had come around full circle by acknowledging that in the performance of its role, the military was duty-bound to uphold civilian supremacy.⁹²⁰

Coup proofing

The principle of civilian supremacy can create a dilemma for evolving democracies in developing countries like Fiji, giving rise to the challenge of how to control a powerful military. Quinlivan (1999) maintains that many regimes impose certain mechanisms to *coup-proof* themselves. ‘Coup-proofing’ refers to a “set of actions a regime takes to prevent a military coup.”⁹²¹ While these actions often depend on the political contexts, there are

⁹¹⁵ Finer, p. 26

⁹¹⁶ In Finer, p. 28

⁹¹⁷ President John F. Kennedy, ‘Special message to Congress on the Defence Budget’, March 28, 1961. US Information Service, cited in Finer, p. 28

⁹¹⁸ Karp, Walter. 1984. “Truman vs MacArthur.” American Heritage Magazine, Vol. 35 (3); p.1

⁹¹⁹ Karp, 1984, p. 10

⁹²⁰ Karp, 1984: p.10

⁹²¹ Quinlivan, James. 1999. Coup-proofing: its practice and consequences in the Middle-East. International Security, Vol. 24(2): p.133;

common characteristics that are also relevant for Fiji. One, is the effective exploitation of family, ethnic, and religious loyalties for critical coup positions.⁹²²

Having recognised the risks of ethnic and tribal cleavages among ethnic Fijians who make up over 90% of the FMF, Ratu Mara had appointed ethnically neutral military Commanders since independence, which have included two Europeans and a Rotuman. The only ‘appointed’ ethnic Fijian commanders prior to 1999, were Ratu Mara’s two sons in law, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau who served as Commander FMF from 1982 to 1987 when Ratu Mara was Prime Minister, and Ratu Epeli Ganilau who became Commander between 1992 and 1999 under Ratu Mara’s Presidency.⁹²³ Rabuka had of course assumed command of the Fiji military following his 1987 coups, a course to be followed by Bainimarama two decades later.

The union of chiefly families from different confederacies through the marriage of daughters goes back to pre-contact era when chiefs sought to consolidate their power base by marrying off their daughters to strong *vanua* that would then provide strong “vasu” (son’s kinship ties to his mother’s *vanua*) allies during times of war. These marriage ties were common during pre-contact era, but evidenced through the marriage of Ratu Mara’s daughters in uniting three key *vanua*, Lau, Cakaudrove and Bau, which constituted the formidable Eastern-based chiefly dynasty that produced Fiji’s leaders at independence. The two sons in law of Ratu Mara were succeeded as Commanders by coup makers: Rabuka replaced Ratu Nailatikau following the 1987 coups, while Bainimarama succeeded Ratu Epeli Ganilau who had resigned to contest, albeit unsuccessfully, the 1999 elections. As military men, Rabuka (army) and Bainimarama (navy) had promoted and rewarded their army and naval colleagues and family members (brothers, brothers in law, children, etc.) to sustain their loyalty. Both Rabuka and Bainimarama utilised the old boys’ networks, Rabuka with QVS and Bainimarama with Marist, both exploited race and ethnicity, indigenous Fijians by Rabuka and Indo-Fijians by Bainimarama, religion, Methodist by Rabuka and Catholic by Bainimarama and tribalism, particularly Rabuka, to gain support and legitimacy for their coups.

⁹²² Quinlivan, p. 133

⁹²³ Since independence, FMF Commanders have included Brig.D.J.Aitken (1971-74), Rotuman Col. Paul Manueli (1974-79), Col. Ian Thorpe (1979-82), Col. Epeli Nailatikau (1982-87), Major-Gen Rabuka (1987-1992), Brig. Epeli Ganilau (1992-1999), Commodore Bainimarama (1999-2014), Col Mosese Tikoitoga (2014-2015), Rear Adm. Viliame Naupoto (2015-current), see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_Fiji_Military_Forces

A second *coup-proofing* tactic involves the creation of a parallel armed force to the regular army.⁹²⁴ Rabuka had set up the Counter-Revolutionary Warfare (CRW) unit also known as the First Meridian Squadron following the 1987 coup, to counter insurgency or terrorist attacks,⁹²⁵ but it was actually to safeguard his post-coup interim regime. By exploiting tribal loyalties, Rabuka staffed the CRW unit with soldiers mostly from his Cakaudrove province and region (Vanua Levu) headed by a former British Army SAS officer also from Cakaudrove,⁹²⁶ who had played a key role in Speight's coup of May 2000. A third *coup-proof* tactic is the development of multiple internal security agencies with overlapping jurisdictions to monitor the loyalty of the military and its units and other security services, with direct communication channels to the coup leader.⁹²⁷ Rabuka had established the Fiji Intelligence Services (FIS) in 1988 under Colonel Metuisela Mua a former senior military officer "to handle national security matters," although FIS was largely perceived as a 'spy unit,' and was criticised for duplicating the role of the Special Branch of the police force.⁹²⁸ FIS was disbanded by the Chaudhry government in 1999 with Chaudhry himself having been subjected to the spy tactics of FIS including phone tapping.⁹²⁹ A fourth coup-proof action is the financing of such measures,⁹³⁰ which explains why there is normally a sharp increase in military budgets following the coups.⁹³¹

These coup-proofing mechanisms can be used to counter one form of masculinity against another. Seeing the overwhelming advantage of coercive power that the military have over civilian leaders, it is critical for civilian governments, particularly those with little military connections, to establish clear, stable and timely management of the civil-military relations

⁹²⁴Quinlivan, p. 133

⁹²⁵ George, Nicole. 2012. Foreign Flowers? Articulating Rights in the Post-coup political economy, in *Situating Women: Gender Politics and Circumstance in Fiji: 1985-1995*. Canberra: ANU Press: p.114

⁹²⁶ Major Ilisoni Ligairi was a retired Special Air Services (SAS) Staff Instructor who had served 20 years with British Army SAS and was recruited by Rabuka to run the CRW unit.

⁹²⁷ Quinlivan, p. 133

⁹²⁸ Pacific Islands Development Program (PIDP), East-West Centre. 1999. Pacific Islands Report, "Fiji Intelligence Service is no more," in <http://www.pireport.org/articles/1999/08/27/fiji-intelligence-service-no-more>;

⁹²⁹ A bill was passed in Parliament in August 1999 to disband FIS and redeploy the 60 staff to the Police force and army; see also Pacific Islands Development Program (PIDP), East-West Centre. 1999. Pacific Islands Report, "Fiji Intelligence Service is no more," in <http://www.pireport.org/articles/1999/08/27/fiji-intelligence-service-no-more>;

⁹³⁰ Quinlivan, p. 13

⁹³¹ SIPRI. 2018. SIPRI Military Expenditure Database in local currency, 1988-2017; in https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2_Data%20for%20all%20countries%20from%201988-2017%20in%20local%20currency.pdf

on a day to day basis.⁹³² The effective management of civil-military relations is critical in the maintenance of cordial working relations between civilian leaders and a hostile military.

Militarized Masculinity and Indigenous Masculinity

Following feminist debates on intersectionality, critical studies of men and masculinities had emphasized the importance of probing power differentials between different groups of men, which underlines that “masculinity must be understood as a multiple and contextually changing categorization.”⁹³³ Connell’s (1995) influential conceptualisation of masculinities notes that, “[T]o speak of masculinities is to speak about gender relations. Masculinities are not equivalent to men, they concern the position of men in a gender order.”⁹³⁴ Connell’s theoretical work on ‘hegemony’ draws from Gramsci’s (1971) conceptualization of class hegemony as a cultural dynamic that creates dominance and subordination between classes.⁹³⁵ According to Connell, hegemonic masculinity/masculinities should be understood as cultural and social practices that legitimize gendered power differentials, privileging some men and making it possible for them to successfully dominate and subordinate women and other men.⁹³⁶

‘Hegemonic masculinity’ is therefore the idealized form of masculinity and male practice that guarantees the dominant position of some men over other men and women,⁹³⁷ and debases and excludes ‘non-manly’ men. In his reference to the South African society, Morrell (2012) proposes three types of masculinities that he considers to be hegemonic with regards to the nature, form and dynamics of male power in South Africa.⁹³⁸ One of these, *African masculinity*,⁹³⁹ portrays a traditional, culturally-based masculinity that is perpetuated through patriarchal indigenous institutions such as chieftainship, communal

⁹³² Feaver, Peter. 1996. Delegation, Monitoring, and Civilian control of the Military: Agency theory and American Civil-Military relations. Working Paper series on US Post-cold war Civil-Military Relations. Harvard University; p.1

⁹³³ Connell, R. See, Masculinities in www.raewynconnell.net/p/masculinities_20.htm

⁹³⁴ *ibid*

⁹³⁵ In Lykke, 2010: p. 63

⁹³⁶ Lykke, 2010: p. 63;

⁹³⁷ Page, E. 2005. Men, Masculinity and Guns: can we break the link? IANSA Women’s Network briefing paper, p. 2

⁹³⁸ Morrell, R., Jewkes, R. and Lindegger, G. 2012. Hegemonic Masculinity/Masculinities in South Africa: Culture, Power, and Gender Politics. *Men and Masculinities*, 15 (1): p. 12;

⁹³⁹ The other two types include, a ‘white’ masculinity as represented in the political and economic dominance of the white ruling class during apartheid; and a ‘black’ masculinity that had emerged in the context of urbanization and the development of geographically separate and culturally distinct African townships; see Morrell, et.al., 2012: p.12

land tenure, and customary law.⁹⁴⁰ This could easily parallel an indigenous *Fijian masculinity* that some commentators have referred to as '*Taukeism*,' which is discussed below.

Taukeism or 'Fijian masculinity'

The term *Taukei* in the indigenous Fijian language, refers to 'owner' or *original owners or settlers of the land*.⁹⁴¹ For example, '*taukei ni vale* (house)⁹⁴² refers to 'owner of the house,' *taukei ni qele* refers to 'owner of the land.' The opposite of '*Taukei*' is '*vulagi*', which connotes a foreigner, guest or stranger. Catholic priest Kevin Barr (1999) refers unfavourably to '*Taukei-ism*' as a 'philosophy of domination and discrimination,'⁹⁴³ while the late Rev. Josateki Koroi, a former President of the Methodist Church, perceives *Taukeism* as the domination of men over women and other men, adult over children, husbands over wives, chiefs over their subjects and Christianity against non-Christians.⁹⁴⁴

I argue however, that Barr and Rev Koroi share an essentialized conception of 'taukeism' that portrays 'taukeism' in a negative generalization of domination and discrimination which fails to highlight the positive indigenous values that embody *taukeism*. These include 'vakarokoroko' (respect) for others or chiefs ('veivakaturagataki'), the opposite of which are 'veibeci (*lack of respect, devaluing the 'other'*), 'dokadoka' or 'qaciqacia' (pride or lack of humility) or 'viavalevu' (*arrogance*).' Interviewees have lamented that the coups and the impact of militarization have brought about a gradual decay of the *taukei* values of respect (*vakarokoroko*) as portrayed through the forceful entry into Parliament, armed seizure of government, forceful behaviour, torture, violence and abuse at the hands of military men.⁹⁴⁵

With reference to indigenous Fijian women, the 'taukei' concept is used more to distinguish her race or ethnicity, rather than status or class to do with ownership of property or resources, since in a patriarchal culture like the indigenous Fijian, ownership of resources are mostly in the hands of chiefs over commoners, clan heads over members and elders

⁹⁴⁰ Morrell, et.al., 2012: p. 12

⁹⁴¹ '*I Taukei*' refers to the original settlers as owners of the land, with its dichotomy being '*vulagi*' which refers to a *foreigner or stranger* in the land. See, Baledrokadroka, J. *Taukei and the new Fijian*.

⁹⁴² *Taukei ni vale* in Fijian translates to *taukei* (owner) *ni* (of) *vale* (house), '*owner of the house*'

⁹⁴³ Barr, Kevin. 1999. P.15; cited in Baledrokadroka, J. *Taukei and the new Fijian*.

⁹⁴⁴ See Baledrokadroka, J. '*Taukei and the new Fijian*'; see also Ernst, M. 1994: p. 208;

⁹⁴⁵ See for example, Halapua, Winston. 2003. *Moral decay, in Tradition, Lotu and Militarism in Fiji*. Lautoka: Fiji Institute of Applied Studies, Ch. 8; pp.173-176;

over youths, who are predominantly men. A further analysis of the *'taukei'* concept, including its gender dynamics is done in the next Chapter in the context of the May 2000, in particular its justification for indigenous rights, similar to the 1987 coups.

Militarized Masculinity and Guns in the military coup of 1987

In the context of Fiji, Fijian hegemonic masculinity as encompassed in *'taukeism'* is also portrayed through the construction of a 'militarized masculinity' which, when combined with the presence of arms (guns), emboldens military personnel and non-military men who have access to arms, to execute coups and perpetrate violence against non-militarized, unarmed men and women. A gendered analysis of the coups and militarization in Fiji must account for the links between culturally endorsed forms of masculinities and the Fiji military as a legitimate 'carrier' of arms and 'perpetrator' of violence. The gendered relationship between 'masculine' men and weapons has increasingly become a feature of feminist critique of militarised men.⁹⁴⁶

Weapons systems are designed mostly by men, marketed mostly for men and used mostly by men, and in many parts of the world are the primary tools of death for young men.⁹⁴⁷ Myrntinen (2003) argues that weapons are part of one notion of masculinity, a militaristic view that equates 'manliness' with the sanctioned use of aggression, force and violence.⁹⁴⁸ Masculinity is socially constructed hence the links between weapons and violent notions of masculinity in cultural contexts cannot be ignored. This is particularly true where the nature of conflicts increasingly becomes one of 'identity,' in which the gendered ethnic identities that are constructed and mobilized tend to be highly militarized,⁹⁴⁹ as witnessed in the post-coup era of 1987, 2000 and 2006. The display of guns in the execution of Fiji's first coup on the floor of Parliament in May 1987, signify that weapons (guns) are a symbol of status by militarized masculinities to achieve political and economic gains, and to wield power over unarmed men and women.⁹⁵⁰

While militaries have vastly advanced since Samuel Finer's time over fifty years ago, there are three political advantages that an armed force has over its civilian counterparts that are still relevant today as when Finer first made this observation: a marked superiority in organization (cohesive, hierarchical, centralized chain of command), a highly emotionalized

⁹⁴⁶ Myrntinen, Henri.2003. Disarming Masculinities. Disarmament Forum (Four): p. 37

⁹⁴⁷ Myrntinen, Henri.2003. Disarming Masculinities. Disarmament Forum (Four): p. 37

⁹⁴⁸ *ibid*

⁹⁴⁹ Myrntinen, 2003: p. 37

⁹⁵⁰ *ibid*

symbolic status (marked by national symbols such as flag-raising, parades) and a monopoly over arms,⁹⁵¹ which this section is concerned about.

Coup theorists have alluded to certain important pre-conditions for a coup to occur, such as a coup 'motive,' the 'will' to act or intervene, and the 'opportunity' to act.⁹⁵² Nordlinger (1977) suggests that a 'military's institutional self-interest' is a crucial underlying motivation for launching a coup.⁹⁵³ These motives shall be investigated below.

FIRST MILITARY COUP -MAY 14 1987

On the morning of May 14 1987, Sitiveni Rabuka, third-ranking officer in the Fiji army,⁹⁵⁴ arrived in Parliament dressed as a civilian in shirt and a Fijian *sulu* (men's pocket skirt).⁹⁵⁵ The Fiji Times headline on May 2, 2000 was captioned, "*The day Rabuka held a country at gunpoint,*" which was a review of his newly launched biography, 'Rabuka of Fiji.'⁹⁵⁶

Extracts from the article state the following account:

At a few minutes to ten the door at the back opened and the Speaker's nephew Sitiveni Rabuka, walked in...For a brief moment he [Speaker] wondered if perhaps this was the day he'd been warned about, of a possible military takeover...the Speaker heard the clock...strike ten....as the last stroke rolled out, the doors at the back were abruptly flung open and a group of masked men armed with 9mm pistols burst into the chamber...Their heavy boots echoed loudly around the now silent House. The men were ...all ...wearing gas masks, except for their leader who wore balaclava over his face. Their pistols were all pointing towards the ceiling...In a precise well-planned military attack, Lieutenant Colonel Rabuka had brought about a political take-over, a coup d'état.⁹⁵⁷

⁹⁵¹ Finer, p.6

⁹⁵² See for example, Finer, 1969; Nordlinger, 1977; Scobbel, p. 187

⁹⁵³ Nordlinger, Eric. 1977. *Soldiers in Politics: Military coups and governments*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall; as cited in Scobbel, 1994: p. 187

⁹⁵⁴ Scobbel, p. 190; Brigadier Ratu Epeli Nailatikau was Commander FMF, Colonel Jim Sanday was 2nd in command and Chief of Staff;

⁹⁵⁵ Pacific scoop. May 14, 2010. Fiji Flashback to the original Sitiveni Rabuka coup, in <http://pacific.scoop.co.nz/2010/05/fiji-flashback-to-the-original-sitiveni-rabuka-coup/>

⁹⁵⁶ Sharpham, John. 2000. *Rabuka of Fiji*. Brisbane: Central Queensland University Press

⁹⁵⁷ Fiji Times, Tues May 2, 2000. "The day Rabuka held a country at gun point," pp 14-15

Applying Connells's conception of 'hegemonic masculinity,' I analyse the power dynamics among the masculinities of the three main groups of men on the floor of Parliament in the above extract, to demonstrate the gendered power differentials and how it privileges some men over others. On the one side, sat a group of newly elected politicians from the NFP-FLP coalition government, glowing in their newly acquired political power and mandate from the people to rule the nation. It is a mixed group of well-educated professionals of predominantly Indo-Fijian men and a few indigenous Fijians, more used to exercising their mental power of reason and logic and professional skills rather than physical strength. On the other side sat the Opposition members of the Alliance party, predominantly Fijian men, bearing the humility of their loss after seventeen years in power. Their leader, former Prime Minister and high chief Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara is not in the House. Opposition member Taniela Veitata is on the floor making a speech,

Peace is quite distinct, Mr Speaker, from the political philosophy of Mao Zedong where he said that political power comes out of the barrel of a gun. In Fiji, there is no gun. But our chiefs are there; we respect them...⁹⁵⁸

From the backdoor of Parliament, enter another group of indigenous men, trained in the application of armed force and violence, and the exhibition of dominance and toughness in the exercise of their duty. The display of aggression is a fundamental characteristic of the institution they represent. As indigenous Fijian men, such display must be understood in terms of the cultural and social practices that legitimize gendered power differentials,⁹⁵⁹ which at this instant privileged those who derive their power from the barrel of the gun (bullet box), over those who derive their power from the ballot box. Veitata spoke too soon when he said that "in Fiji, there is no gun," for as if on cue, the men with the guns entered. The words of Ruth First (1970) become pertinent here that,

The army coup d'état is plainly a short circuit of power conflicts in a situation where arms do the deciding. ...Power lies in the hands of those who control the means of violence. It lies in the barrel of a gun, fired or silent.⁹⁶⁰

⁹⁵⁸ Pacific scoop. May 14, 2010. Fiji Flashback to the original Sitiveni Rabuka coup, in <http://pacific.scoop.co.nz/2010/05/fiji-flashback-to-the-original-sitiveni-rabuka-coup/>

⁹⁵⁹ Lykke, 2010: p. 63

⁹⁶⁰ First, Ruth. 1970. *The Barrel of a gun: political power in Africa and the coup d'état*. London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press; ix, p.6;

The fate of Fiji was now in the hands of those who carry the guns that would ultimately “do the deciding.”

Connell notes that different social contexts produce different hegemonic practices and masculinities, which should be understood in their intersections with other social categories such as class, race, ethnicity, sexuality and others.⁹⁶¹

The display of hegemonic masculinities must therefore be understood in a context where Rabuka had justified the coup to safeguard the rights and interests of indigenous Fijians and their chiefs when he had stated,⁹⁶²

If I hadn't staged the coup, they (indigenous Fijians) would have gone out burning houses and cane fields and using physical violence against people. The army would have been called up and it would have been a direct confrontation between the army and the Fijians, who make up 97% of the army.⁹⁶³

To examine the motivation of Rabuka and the men who took the risk of mounting the coup, I consider two issues in particular: Saffu's presumption of a pre-coup traditional-aristocratic model of civil-military relations,⁹⁶⁴ and Finer's observation that military intervention in politics can be attributed to circumstances that may have injured its pride as a peculiar corporation.⁹⁶⁵

For Saffu, civilian supremacy prior to the coup was predicated primarily on traditional-aristocratic patterns.⁹⁶⁶ The Alliance government under Ratu Mara campaigned as a multi-racial coalition, yet dominated by the Fijian association, and comprised branches which represented other races such as European, Chinese and Indo-Fijian. These smaller bodies were willing to acknowledge and accept indigenous Fijian primacy in return for undisturbed professional, educational and commercial advantages.⁹⁶⁷ Moreover, the traditional-aristocratic pattern was evident in the political dominance of members of leading aristocratic families in their relations with officers of the FMF and in the almost hundred

⁹⁶¹ Lykke, p. 63

⁹⁶² Sanday, J. 1991. *The Politicization of Military Professionalism in Fiji*, in Selochan, V. *The Military, the State and Development in Asia and the Pacific*. Boulder, USA: Westview Press Inc., Ch.11; p. 239;

⁹⁶³ *Fiji Times*, May 28 1987, p. 8; as cited in Scobbel, 1994: 197

⁹⁶⁴ Saffu, 1990: 162

⁹⁶⁵ Finer, p.39

⁹⁶⁶ Saffu, p. 159, 161

⁹⁶⁷ Alley, R. 2001. *Fiji's coups of 1987 and 2000: A comparison*. RJP, p. 219

percent ethnic Fijian composition of the army.⁹⁶⁸ Sanday points to a key concept of the traditional aristocratic model, which is the pervasive belief held by many indigenous Fijians that political power is the exclusive preserve of chiefs.⁹⁶⁹ Such a belief or sense of entitlement results from over a hundred years of colonial indoctrination of pre-democratic values which was sustained by British paternalism and indirect rule, and embodied in the 1970 constitution.⁹⁷⁰ Among the mainstream indigenous community at the time of the coup, such belief was encouraged by the notion that politics was the preserve of chiefly elites, which presumed that political leadership without chiefly participation was less secure and lacked legitimacy.⁹⁷¹ As Lawson (2004) notes about the newly elected Bavadra government:

The legitimacy of the new government was weakly supported, and therefore vulnerable to challenge since it was opposed by a dominant political discourse which had succeeded in elevating a particular group of Fijians to a position of almost exclusive authority. Civilian leaders are regarded as legitimate insofar as they are part of the same social network of aristocratic families that provides military leaders.⁹⁷²

One of the hallmarks of a mature democracy is the peaceful transition of power from one government (political party) to another. I argue that the defeat of the Alliance Party in 1987 was perceived by many indigenous Fijians not only as a rejection of chiefly leadership, but a loss of face for the chiefs and their people, a perception that was borne with bitterness among many in the indigenous community, including military officers.

This also affirms Finer's observation that a motivation for military intervention is injured pride,⁹⁷³ which is not acceptable to hegemonic masculinity. The burden of restoring the pride and status of the chiefs must have been seriously considered by Rabuka and his men. Rabuka had claimed that the military was only trying to "protect the chiefs and their people" and as a 'warrior' it was his duty to protect the chief.⁹⁷⁴ His reference to 'warrior'

⁹⁶⁸ Saffu, p.161

⁹⁶⁹ Sanday, p. 253

⁹⁷⁰ *ibid*

⁹⁷¹ *ibid*

⁹⁷² Lawson, S. 2004. *The Military versus Democracy in Fiji: Problems for contemporary political development*, in May, R.J. and Selochan, V. (eds.) *The Military and Democracy in Asia and the Pacific*. Canberra: ANU E-Press, Ch. 9; p. 5/6

⁹⁷³ Finer, p.39

⁹⁷⁴ Norton, R. 1990. *Race and Politics in Fiji*. Santa Lucia: Univ of Queensland Press, 2nd edn, p. 139

may also be interpreted both in his traditional capacity as *bati*⁹⁷⁵ or traditional warrior to his paramount chief the *Tui Cakau*⁹⁷⁶ and Governor General (later President) Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, or it could also refer to the military as a class, acting on behalf of the traditional aristocratic civil-military alliance described earlier. As Scarr (1988) states, when Rabuka came into the Governor-General's office he referred to his having 'effected' what the chiefs had wanted,⁹⁷⁷ indicating a strong sense of solidarity with the ruling class and deference for the 'status' of chiefs. It also reinforces the 'personal' factor alluded to by Decalo (1976) as a strong motivation for coups.⁹⁷⁸ At the time of the coup for example, Rabuka was a subject of an impending court-martial,⁹⁷⁹ while the coups of Speight (2000) and Bainimarama (2006) both bore marks of personal grievances.

Lastly, I consider Nordlinger's suggestion that 'military institutional self-interest,' can be a motive for the coup.⁹⁸⁰ The newly elected Coalition government had come to power on a radical platform based on its mandate to rule. It immediately began to implement social welfare policy changes and other major election manifesto promises.⁹⁸¹ These included a long-standing commitment to overhaul the 2,600-strong military and to set a new foreign policy course. It was clear that the Bavadra government was in favour of a substantial reduction in the size of the Fiji military, as reflected in the Governor General's address to the new parliament three days before the coup:⁹⁸²

In the coming years, the RFMF's role in the areas of defence, nation-building, internal security and international peacekeeping will be reviewed with a view to improving its overall effectiveness. We must see to it that our military serves our needs and not those of others.⁹⁸³

Further statements by the Coalition foreign minister hinted that the new government would pursue a non-aligned foreign policy and follow New Zealand's lead to ban visits by

⁹⁷⁵ Scarr, p. 73 (Ch. 18: Turaga and Bati)

⁹⁷⁶ The title *Tui Cakau* or *Chief of Cakaudrove* (Cakau in short) belongs to the paramount Chief of Cakaudrove, the province where Rabuka hails from.

⁹⁷⁷ Scarr, Deryck. 1988. *The Politics of Illusion*. Kensington: NSW University Press; p. 73

⁹⁷⁸ Decalo, S. 1976. *Cous and Army Rule in Africa: Studies in Military Style*. New Haven: Yale University Press; see Saffu, pp. 162-3

⁹⁷⁹ Saffu, p. 163

⁹⁸⁰ Nordlinger, 1977, p.12 as cited in Scobbel, 1994: p. 187

⁹⁸¹ Scobbel, p. 191

⁹⁸² *ibid*

⁹⁸³ Scobbel, p. 192

nuclear-armed naval vessels.⁹⁸⁴ Such policy deviations would have been viewed negatively by the military, particularly any attempt to undermine traditional foreign relations or to reduce peacekeeping commitment, a much-needed source of income for army personnel.

Ruth First (1970) notes that ‘the army generally acts... for army reasons,’⁹⁸⁵ hence the interests of the FMF as an institution which appeared to be under threat from the new government, could also have been a motivating factor in the coup.

Sanday observes that at this critical time of uncertainty in Fiji, when the new government was already planning reforms for the FMF, it failed to immediately clarify the terms of its relationship with the FMF or to establish a viable alternative to the ‘traditional-aristocratic’ civil-military model that its predecessor, the Alliance government had maintained as the basis of civilian supremacy.⁹⁸⁶ Scobbel asserts that the Fiji case highlights the importance for a government to consult the armed force prior to making substantial cuts or reforms in the military.⁹⁸⁷

The differences between civilian leaders and the military remain a huge challenge, between a government made up of men who derive their power from political masculinity based on their election mandate (power) to rule and implement reforms, against a military that perceives these reforms as a challenge to its militarized and hegemonic masculinity. Ethnically, it was a challenge between a predominantly ethnic Fijian military against a government perceived to be predominantly Indo-Fijian. Teaiwa (2005) sums it up well when she states that, “it was not until the coups of...1987 that the military came to be viewed not only as a threat to democracy, but also as a bastion of Fijian masculinity and a threat to multiculturalism.”⁹⁸⁸

Revisiting Indigenous values in 1987 coups

A 19th century description of Fijian men by a traveller to Fiji noted that, “[I]n war they are fearless and savage to the utmost degree, but in peace their disposition is mild and generous.”⁹⁸⁹ The forcible removal at gun-point of members of the Bavadra-government on May 14 1987, marked a modern display of hegemonic Fijian masculinity which may be

⁹⁸⁴ *ibid*

⁹⁸⁵ First, Ruth. 1970. *The Barrel of a gun: political power in Africa and the coup d’etat*. London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press; p. 12

⁹⁸⁶ Sanday, 1991: pp. 256

⁹⁸⁷ Scobbel, p.198

⁹⁸⁸ Teaiwa, 2005: p. 206

⁹⁸⁹ Clunie, 1977: p. 19; in Teaiwa, 2005: p. 218

considered '*veibeci*' (devaluing or lacking respect) in the Fijian culture. First, '*veibeci*' [for] the higher principle of democracy through the display of unruly, forceful and aggressive behaviour on the floor of Parliament, which represents the highest democratic institution in the land. Second, '*veibeci*' for the will of the majority of people (Indo-Fijians and Fijians) who had elected the new government 'free and fair'. Third, '*veibeci*' and discrimination against Indo-Fijians by justifying the coup on the basis of 'race' thereby reinstating and reinforcing the politics of exclusion of the colonial era.⁹⁹⁰ And finally, *veibeci* to a Fijian leader from the Western side of Fiji (Dr Bavadra), who is perceived to fall outside of the "Eastern" chiefly dynasty that have dominated and ruled over Fiji since independence, even though his wife Adi Kuini Vuikaba shared close kinship ties with members of the dynasty.

The silence of the Alliance Party leadership and Fijian institutions such as the Great Council of Chiefs, by failing to publicly condemn the coup or to use their *mana*⁹⁹¹ (influence) to call on the military to uphold the 1970 constitution and return to the barracks,⁹⁹² marked the defeat of the principle of civilian supremacy and its eventual relegation to the dustbin of Fiji's political history. More importantly, though many indigenous Fijians failed to realise at the time, the coup was to signify the gradual decline and ultimate severance of the patronage relationship between the Fiji military and the Fijian aristocratic (chiefly) class. The long-held chiefly patronage of the Fiji military since the colonial era would be reversed, with the chiefs now beholden to the military. The 1987 coups therefore marked the beginning of the 'politicization of the military's professionalism,'⁹⁹³ and the 'militarization' of Fiji's political governance that was to condemn Fiji to a rocky path towards democracy and development in years to come. The coup also marked the beginning of the end for the chiefs and their institution, the Great Council of Chiefs, with their waning influence and declining relevance.

⁹⁹⁰ Robertson, Robbie. 2001. Retreat from exclusion? Identities in post-coup Fiji, in Akram-Lodhi. *Confronting Fiji Futures*, Ch. 12; pp. 269-303

⁹⁹¹ The word '*mana*' is of Polynesian origin and refers in particular to Chiefs or those in high positions to command aura, prestige, power and authority associated with their leadership.

⁹⁹² Alley, p. 220; In talks and conference held in London, the Alliance party, together with the National Federation Party (NFP) had been part of the negotiations for the final design of the 1970 Constitution.

⁹⁹³ Sanday, 1991

Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the 1987 military coups

This section applies a feminist intersectional perspective to analyse the construction of gender in the militarization of Fiji following the 1987 coups.

The Bavadra government was labelled “Indian dominated” because its electoral power-base came from the National Federation party (NFP) which rose to power through the support of Indian cane farmers and the Indo-Fijian middle class,⁹⁹⁴ plus the fact that Bavadra’s government had more Indo-Fijians than ethnic Fijian Members of Parliament by 19 to 7.⁹⁹⁵ Coup instigators therefore began to propagate an agenda of fear and suspicion that the rights of indigenous Fijians were now at stake and would be eroded by the new government’s potential manipulation of the constitution, indigenous lands and as a front for Indo-Fijian commercial interests.⁹⁹⁶

Coup supporters ignored the fact that the new government’s victory was possible by capturing four predominant Fijian national urban seats, where educated middle class Fijian workers including women, had voted for the Labour Party. It also indicated the growing discontent and disaffection of many indigenous Fijians for the ruling Alliance government that had grown aloof and isolated from their daily realities.⁹⁹⁷ The Alliance leaders had failed to heed the warning by Fiji’s great statesman Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna in his address to the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC) in 1944:

Today a different form of education is necessary to fit us for increased responsibilities. We need clearly to understand and be always conscious of the fact that we can only be sure of our people continuing to follow us provided they appreciate that our authority is better than that of anyone else, that as a result of our forethought and energy they prosper- that is when we cease to rely on status to see us through and when we prove once more that we possess both the qualification and the authority to rise up to the occasion such as our ancestors possessed.⁹⁹⁸

By the time of the 1987 election, educated Fijians in urban areas were able to make informed choices about their elected representatives and were no longer influenced by

⁹⁹⁴ Griffen, 1991: p.1/4

⁹⁹⁵ Sanday, 1991: p.240

⁹⁹⁶ Alley, p. 220

⁹⁹⁷ Alley, 2001: p. 219

⁹⁹⁸ Scarr, Deryck (ed.) 1983. Fiji: The Three-Legged Stool. London: Macmillan Education, p. 360; Translation of Ratu Sukuna’s address to the Council of Chiefs, 6 November 1944;

the perception (misconception) that leadership was the exclusive preserve of chiefs, particularly when these chiefs were no longer responsive or accountable to the needs of the ordinary people.

In response to criticism that the Bavadra government was pro-Indian, the new government hastened to assure that Fijian interests were protected by racial parity in Bavadra's cabinet, with Fijians holding all the important domestic portfolios.⁹⁹⁹ The offices of Governor General, Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition remained in ethnic Fijian hands, while Fijians dominated the upper echelons of the civil service, the predominantly Fijian army and more than half of the Police force.¹⁰⁰⁰ The charge of 'Indian dominated' was therefore not supported by evidence.

Nevertheless, as Sanday argues, Fijian tradition was used to legitimize the coup through the support given to Rabuka by the Alliance leaders and the GCC, the body charged with safeguarding the interests of indigenous Fijians.¹⁰⁰¹ Ratu Mara joined Rabuka's Council of Ministers and was immediately assigned the foreign affairs portfolio. Meanwhile, Rabuka was promoted to full Colonel, appointed commander of the FMF and formally pardoned for his role in the overthrow of the Bavadra government,¹⁰⁰² indicating chiefly sanction for a coup that was clearly outside of the law and constitutional provisions.

The caretaker government appointed by the Governor General was tasked to return the country to an elected civilian government. A peace agreement had just been reached between Ratu Mara and Dr Bavadra, when a second coup was carried out by Rabuka on 25 September 1987, on the ground that his initial objective of entrenching the political supremacy of indigenous Fijians in a new constitution, had not been met.¹⁰⁰³ The second coup aimed to consolidate the gains of the first coup.¹⁰⁰⁴ Rabuka abrogated the 1970 constitution, declared Fiji a republic under the President as head of state, and appointed former Governor General, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau as President. He (Rabuka) installed a military government and appointed Fijian Ministers from the army and the militant Fijian *Taukei Movement*. By December 1987, Rabuka had transferred power back to an 'interim government' headed by Ratu Mara as interim Prime Minister. Rabuka himself retained the

⁹⁹⁹ These included Home Affairs, Agriculture, Fijian Affairs, Rural Development, Education and Labour.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Sanday, p. 240

¹⁰⁰¹ Sanday, p. 257

¹⁰⁰² Sanday, p. 257

¹⁰⁰³ Griffen, 1991: p. 1; Sanday, pp. 257-258

¹⁰⁰⁴ Sanday, p.258

position of Commander of FMF and the portfolio of Minister for Home Affairs which the military comes under, thus began a process of 'politicising' the role of Commander FMF, and the 'militarisation' of government Ministries.¹⁰⁰⁵ The 'interim regime' depended on military backing for its survival which saw the process of the militarisation of the public service and civilian life by appointing army officers into public service roles. The coups had escalated racially-motivated violence, diminished respect for the rule of law and reinforced an abiding insecurity about human and political rights under the new 1990 racially biased constitution.¹⁰⁰⁶

Robertson (2001) argues that the 1987 coups represented an attempt to dismiss Fiji's post-independence multiracial accommodation by reasserting the exclusive identities of the colonial era.¹⁰⁰⁷ The 1970 constitution had fallen short of engendering a sense of belonging, tolerance and understanding between the two major races through national symbols such as a common name. Section 134 of the 1970 constitution, apart from being sexist and patriarchal, continued to distinguish between the two ethnic groups as Indian and Fijian:

(a) a person shall be regarded as 'Fijian' if his father or any of his earlier male progenitors in the male line is or was the child of parents both of whom are or were indigenous inhabitants of Fiji, or any island in Melanesia, Micronesia or Polynesia; (b) a person shall be regarded as Indian if...his father...in the male line is or was the child of parents both of whom are or were indigenous inhabitants of the sub-continent of India."¹⁰⁰⁸

The racial overtones of the colonial era became even more pronounced in the post-coup era when both 'official' (1990 constitution) and 'unofficial' discrimination and violence were perpetrated against Indo-Fijians. As Leckie (2001) acknowledges, the colonial and racially-bounded hierarchies reinforced both ethnic and gender stereotypes and inequalities through both ideology and more visible structures.¹⁰⁰⁹ During the post-coup constitutional process however, 'Indians' became referred to as 'Indo-Fijians,' as a more inclusive reference with a human rights connotation.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Griffen, 1991: p.1

¹⁰⁰⁶ *ibid*

¹⁰⁰⁷ Robertson. Robbie. 2001. Retreat from exclusion? Identities in post-coup Fiji, in Akram-Lodhi. *Confronting Fiji Futures*; Ch. 12: p. 269

¹⁰⁰⁸ *The Fiji Independence Order 1970*, S. 134; pp. 94-95

¹⁰⁰⁹ Leckie, p. 186; see also Robertson, 2001;

The 1987 coups had exploited 'race' to justify the overthrow of the perceived 'Indo-Fijian NFP-FLP coalition government, which led to tension and racially motivated attacks by (some) ethnic Fijians against (some) Indo-Fijians.¹⁰¹⁰ When a group of Indo-Fijian men, women and children attending a prayer meeting at Albert Park in the capital city were attacked by a group of Fijian men, who chased them through the streets of Suva, the incident provoked such horror and revulsion at the scale of open aggression never witnessed before.¹⁰¹¹ A young Indo-Fijian male journalist and lawyer, who previously served as Bavadra's spokesman was threatened and beaten up by a group from the militant *Taukei Movement*, an indigenous nationalist movement which rallied support on two key issues, the paramountcy of indigenous rights and a Fijian Christian identity.¹⁰¹² Such tactics perpetrated by indigenous Fijian males were aimed at intimidating the Indian population in general. Garrett observes the relative silence of the Indo-Fijian community, "a group once known as vocal and assertive" but now displaying 'general caution and restrained silence.'¹⁰¹³ Feminist academic and activist Vanessa Griffen described the deeply traumatic and shocking experiences at a level of repression and human rights abuses never before experienced in Fiji.¹⁰¹⁴ The militant *Taukei Movement* in collusion with radicals in the Methodist church and backed by sympathisers in the military, inflicted a reign of terror and harassment against Indo-Fijians. As Griffen states,

...the experience...showed people in Fiji the raw face of army control: a curfew was [imposed] and enforced, roadblocks, checks of vehicles, and harassment of people became a common occurrence. The enforcement of a Sunday observance decree established a closer degree of military-civilian contact and repression.¹⁰¹⁵

In her critique of 'identity politics,' Yuval Davis (1997) warns that the 'nation state' is a de facto [hegemonic] masculine entity in which the interests of women and others are subsumed to the interests of the male-masculine nation.¹⁰¹⁶ Gill (2001) argues further that

¹⁰¹⁰ Teaiwa, 2005: p. 210

¹⁰¹¹ Griffen, 2001; p.2

¹⁰¹² Garrett, 1990: p. 108; George, 2012: p. 110; see also, Kelly and Kaplan, 2001: 174 as cited in George, p.110;

¹⁰¹³ Garrett, p. 92; 106

¹⁰¹⁴ Griffen, p.3

¹⁰¹⁵ Griffen, p.3

¹⁰¹⁶ Yuval-Davis, N. 1997. *Gender and Nation*. London: Sage Publications; cited in Frederick, Paula. 1997. Book review, [Copyright Sociological Research Online, 1997](http://www.socresonline.org.uk/2/3/frederick.html)
<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/2/3/frederick.html> ;

nations often engage in acts of violence, segregation, censorship, economic coercion and political oppression against those (of their own citizens and other nations) who are imagined as threatening or dangerous “Others.”¹⁰¹⁷

The 1987 coups thus reinforced the construction of a hegemonic masculine Fijian state that perpetrated acts of violence and political oppression against Indo-Fijians, a group whom they considered as “Others” due to what they “perceive” as the threat of the increasing Indians’ power and control over the economy and political domain.

Official discrimination was imposed by the interim regime with the support of the army and the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC) through the 1990 constitution. It guaranteed parliamentary majority for indigenous Fijians in the House of Representatives (Lower House) with 37 reserved seats out of 70 seats.¹⁰¹⁸ The positions of President and Prime Minister were to be held only by ethnic Fijians. The constitution was highly criticised and condemned locally and abroad mostly by Indo-Fijians for its discriminatory race-based provisions against Indo-Fijians.¹⁰¹⁹

The 1990 constitution re-inscribed the status and power of the traditional chiefs by formally recognising the role of the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC). From an advisory role on indigenous Fijian interests in the colonial era, and the power to nominate eight members to the Senate (Upper house) in the 1970 constitution,¹⁰²⁰ the increasing influence of the GCC was now elevated in the 1990 constitution as the appointing authority for the President (and Commander in Chief of the FMF) and the Vice President.¹⁰²¹

When the first post-coup election was held in 1992 under the 1990 constitution, Rabuka’s *Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei* (SVT) party won with a slim majority.¹⁰²² Surprisingly,

¹⁰¹⁷ Gill, Valentine. 2001. *Social Geographies: Space and Society*. London: Pearson Education Ltd.; p. 298

¹⁰¹⁸ Jalal, p. 2

¹⁰¹⁹ Jalal, 2002: p.1

¹⁰²⁰ S.45 of 1970 constitution specifies the role of the GCC in appointing 8 nominees to the Senate in consultation with the Governor General;

¹⁰²¹ Section 3, 1990 Constitution, states: This constitution recognises the Bose Levu Vakaturaga (BLV) or Great Council of Chiefs (GCC); p. 22

¹⁰²² *Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei* (SVT) translates to Fijian Coalition Party, was a GCC-sponsored party in which Rabuka had stood for presidency against Ro Lala Mara, paramount chief of Rewa province, head of Burebasaga confederacy, and wife of Ratu Sir K. Mara. Rabuka surprisingly won signalling one of many paradoxes between the justification of the 1987 coups on indigenous rights and the unintended outcomes.

Rabuka became Prime Minister with the support of Mahendra Chaudhry's Fiji Labour Party (FLP), a coalition partner in the deposed Bavadra government.

In what is perhaps the biggest irony, Rabuka who had justified the coup to wrest back power and control to the chiefs, had five years later, become the Prime Minister and leader of the chiefs-sponsored SVT party. Though not a chief, Rabuka had contested the position of party leader against the highest ranking female paramount chief of the Burebasaga confederacy. The writing was on the wall for the chiefly institution. The coups had clearly become a symptom of the waning influence of the chiefs. By sanctioning the coups, the chiefs have clearly gone against the spirit of Cession and the symbolic act of Ratu Cakobau in surrendering his war club and what it stood for, (law of the jungle versus the rule of law of civilised societies), thus paving the way for entrenched military power and rule, and the beginning of the end for chiefly power and influence.

II. WOMEN'S AGENCY IN POST-1987 COUPS

This section interrogates femininities as the other aspect of gender relations in militarization, (see Section One on Masculinity), by focusing on the intersection between militarization and the capacity of women to express 'agency' both as individuals and collectively as a movement in response to the changing political and socio-economic conditions of the 1987 coups. An intersectional framework is applied to explore the ways in which women's lives are affected by their location in the multiple hierarchies of identities and relations such as race, ethnicity, class, status, age, location and religion, among others and how these impact on their experiences and responses to militarization.

Scholarly analyses of 'agency' and women's organising in Fiji and the Pacific include works by George (2012), and Leckie (2002), among others.¹⁰²³ George notes for example that studies on women's organising and political agency tend to focus on three key features which include the tendency for 'reform-orientation,' 'resistance-oriented,' and 'transnationalism.' The first is concerned with the 'reform capacities' of women's organisations and institutional agency; the second demonstrates the group's 'capacity to act as sites of resistance,' while the third refers to the ability for 'transnationalism.'¹⁰²⁴ These three features are also underlined in this study, which sees 'agency' as the process

¹⁰²³ See for example, Eclces; Harrington (2004); Chatterier (2005); Dickson-Waiko (2003); Pollard (2000);

¹⁰²⁴ George, 2012: pp 6-7

by which women are able to use their abilities, skills and resources (such as time, space, money and energy), to be able to ‘act’ for positive outcomes. The ability to “act” may take the form of ‘resistance’ or mobilising for change and ‘reforms.’ Women are able to **express** political agency by participating and expressing their voice in society through representation (resistance) in formal politics, mobilising and engaging in collective actions and associations to influence policy (reform orientation).¹⁰²⁵

As noted by Eccles, studies of women’s agency in the Pacific including Fiji,¹⁰²⁶ have contributed to greater understanding of agency when expressed within the constraining structures of the patriarchal systems that confront women, which have become obvious in Fiji especially during post-coup conditions of oppression and militarisation.¹⁰²⁷ In the dominant dualistic discourse of ‘victim’ or ‘agent,’¹⁰²⁸ the capacity of women to be able to express agency under the oppressive militarised conditions of the 1987 coups shall be the focus of this section.

Women’s responses to militarization, armed conflict or even war can take various forms. Cock (1989) observes for example, that women in South Africa responded to militarization’s support of apartheid through ‘compliance (support), retreat (withdraw) or challenge (resist).’¹⁰²⁹ In Fiji, women’s responses to militarization in the post-coup era can be analysed in terms of the “4Rs”: ‘Resistance’, ‘Reinforcement’ (support), ‘Retreat’ (withdraw) or ‘Resignation,’ (compliance, acceptance or indifference).

The ethnic nature of the 1987 coups had generated a mass ‘retreat’ or mass migration of large numbers of skilled Indo-Fijian men and women to developed countries like New Zealand, Australia, the USA and Canada. The “brain drain” caused a chronic shortage of skilled workers such as teachers, doctors and nurses,¹⁰³⁰ severely hampering development in Fiji. Those who remained, both Fijians and Indo-Fijians, ‘resigned’ themselves to having one form of patriarchal leadership (politician male chiefs) replaced by another (masculine military officers). There were women who supported the coups and its justification on

¹⁰²⁵ World Bank Group, World Development Report (WDR) 2012; p. 150

¹⁰²⁶ See for example, Leckie, J. (2002); Harrington (2004); Chattier (2005); Dickson-Waiko (2003); Pollard (2000); George (2012);

¹⁰²⁷ Eccles, Zoe. Women’s agency in the Pacific: a reappraisal, in http://www.academia.edu/9240198/Women’s_Agency_in_the_Pacific_a_reappraisal

¹⁰²⁸ *ibid*

¹⁰²⁹ Cock, J. 1989. Keeping the Fires burning: Militarisation and the Politics of Gender in South Africa. *Review of African Political Economy*, No 45/46; p. 62.

¹⁰³⁰ See Baba, 1989; Mitchell, 1989; in Lateef, 1990: p. 122

indigenous rights, based on their ethnic, cultural, kinship ties and relations, or religious and ideological values. Based on the transformative goals of this thesis, this section shall focus on expressions of women's agency through the twin R's of 'resistance' and 'reforms.'¹⁰³¹

The section begins with an outline on the evolution of some women's organisations that played key roles in response to the 1987 coups and the impacts of militarization. These include the *Soqosoqo Vakamarama i Taukei* (SSVM) or the Fijian Women's Association, Pan Pacific South East Asia Women's Association (PPSEAWA), Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA or Y), Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) and the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM). The capacity of these organisations to express agency is examined in three key areas: resistance to the coups and militarization, violence against women and political mobilisation for democratic changes.

Women's Movement: Colonial to Post-independence

Fiji's post-colonial transition in the 1970s occurred at a time when the exportation of second-wave feminism to the developing world was at its height, hence the history of the women's movement in Fiji paralleled post-colonial registers of transnational influence.¹⁰³²

As the issue of "women" increasingly became a concern for the colonial government in the early 20th century, it established an indigenous women's organisation in 1924 led by chiefly women which was initially called 'Ruve' or 'Dove' to symbolise women's work for peace. It later evolved into the *Soqosoqo Vakamarama I Taukei* (SSVM),¹⁰³³ whose membership is open to indigenous Fijian women over 21 years. While programs initially focused on home craft skills, since the 1990s they have sought donor-funding for social justice and development projects to benefit both rural and urban-based Fijian women. As American interests in "women's issues" in the Pacific increased, it influenced the founding of a Pan Pacific and South East Asian Women's Association (PPSEAWA) in 1930, that would serve as the "women's arm" of a high level American-led political and economic alliance to ensure Pacific "security" in post-World War 2 reconstruction.¹⁰³⁴ Riles (2000) notes that PPSEAWA was intended to be an organisation of elite women from the Pacific-rim countries

¹⁰³¹ George, 2012: pp.221-222

¹⁰³² See Riles, Annelise. 2000. *The network inside out*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press; p.27

¹⁰³³ Riles, p.27

¹⁰³⁴ Riles, p. 27

who would discuss child nutrition, education and other non-political issues.”¹⁰³⁵ Now part of a global women’s coalition, PPSEAWA Fiji has an open multiracial membership, with funding grants from PPSEAWA International and overseas donors. In the 1950s, PPSEAWA served as an umbrella organization of women’s clubs and groups in Fiji, which later evolved into the Fiji National Council of Women (FNCW).¹⁰³⁶ Following the 2000 coup, the organisation raised funds to establish and maintain a Peace garden in the heart of Suva.¹⁰³⁷ PPSEAWA is actively involved in peace and economic empowerment programs for women in the urban periphery, particularly in the squatter settlements around Suva.

Another significant event in the history of “women’s issues” was the founding of the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) in 1962, which became an arena of international activity in Fiji. Two Australian women arrived in Fiji in 1962 at the request of a group of elite Europeans in an effort to import the social institutions of the colonial centre to Fiji.¹⁰³⁸ Their European patrons envisioned that the two Australians would be middle-class white women with skills in running kindergartens and art programs which they did achieve exceptionally well. The success of the ‘Y’ (as it was affectionately known) since inception, was the ability of its founders to attract young educated Fijian women to be involved in its activities, at a time when other women’s organisations still tended to be ‘social-welfare’ oriented.¹⁰³⁹ The YWCA was credited with “politicising” a generation of young women, including Amelia Rokotuivuna who became YWCA’s first paid staff and local Director in the early 1970s and a very influential and outspoken activist in the 1987 coup era. Riles describes that,

By all accounts, the YWCA did indeed create a forum and meeting place for an emerging cadre of young Fijian, Indian, and Part-European women who saw themselves as feminists, critics of colonial and chiefly power, and opponents of segregation and racism in Fiji.

Former members of the YWCA remember with fondness their experience at the ‘Y,’ as it was the first time that women of different races met on an equal footing. They associated the ‘Y’ with the watershed moments in Fiji’s contemporary history, such as taking refuge at the ‘Y’ building in the centre of Suva during the anti-Indian marches in the early days leading

¹⁰³⁵ Ibid, p.28

¹⁰³⁶ Riles, p.28

¹⁰³⁷ Fiji Sun, 31/08/2013. Women Meet for Peace in Garden, in <http://fijisun.com.fj/2013/08/31/women-meet-for-peace-in-garden/>

¹⁰³⁸ Riles, p.29

¹⁰³⁹ ibid

up to the 1987 coup and afterwards.¹⁰⁴⁰ The new leaders of YWCA embraced the “activist” agenda and no longer limited their activities to traditional “women’s” issues but framed their agency in terms of their resistance to the political causes in the Pacific at the time, such as the struggle for independence and the French nuclear testing. YWCA activists developed the capacity for agency on issues such as decolonisation, self-determination and struggle for independence, post-colonial capitalism, peace and nuclear disarmament, not only in Fiji but for the whole Pacific region.¹⁰⁴¹

In the early to mid-1980s, two feminist-oriented groups were established. The Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre (FWCC) was founded in 1983 when women of different races, nationalities, religions and ideologies, got together to voice concern against the increasing number of sexual attacks on women in and around the capital city of Suva.¹⁰⁴² The group was concerned about the total lack of support services for women, and decided to work towards providing such a service themselves, hence the Women’s Crisis Centre became operational in August 1984.¹⁰⁴³ The Centre faced the double dilemma of providing practical counselling and moral support for victims of rape and domestic violence on the one hand, and undertaking advocacy to challenge traditional and cultural notions of masculinity as manifested through oppression, physical and sexual violence, rape and control over women, on the other. There were concerns that possible funding from government’s bilateral aid could be refused. It was learnt later through the “women’s grapevine” that Government did not like the word “crisis” as it gave Fiji a bad name and spoiled Fiji’s image as a tourist paradise destination, hence the withholding of funds.¹⁰⁴⁴ The Centre refused to compromise, choosing instead to forgo the funds rather than their brand name,¹⁰⁴⁵ which had taken a long and painful struggle to establish and reflected the needs of women for whom the service is intended.

To avoid putting the practical programs of the Centre at risk however, it was resolved that a new organisation should be created to take a more state-focused advocacy and overtly

¹⁰⁴⁰ Riles, p. 29

¹⁰⁴¹ Narsey, W. 2005. *Amelia Rokotuivuna: A Light shines on*, in Fiji Times, 7 June, 2005

¹⁰⁴² Ali, Shamima. 1987. The Women’s Crisis Centre in Suva, Fiji, in *Women, Development and Empowerment: A Pacific Feminist Perspective*, Report of a Pacific Women’s Workshop, Naboutini, Fiji, 23 March, 1986, ed. V. Griffen (Kuala Lumpur: Asian and Pacific Development Centre) pp 37; downloaded from: <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-GriWom2-c2-5.html>

¹⁰⁴³ Ali, 1987: pp 37-44; downloaded from: <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-GriWom2-c2-5.html>

¹⁰⁴⁴ Ali, 1989; p. 40;

¹⁰⁴⁵ *ibid*

political path.¹⁰⁴⁶ The Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) was therefore set up in 1986 to lobby government for legislative change, mainly in the areas of family and rape laws, citizenship and employment legislation aimed at addressing the issue of women's political status and equality both in the workplace and the home, and to campaign against violence in the family and the community.¹⁰⁴⁷

Notably, the period leading to the elections of 1987 was described as "a generally positive time for women's organising in Fiji." The May 14 coup however severely disrupted the momentum of the women's movement, which relegated women's issues to the back burner, as more pressing issues confronted the women's movement in the immediate post-coup period.¹⁰⁴⁸

Intersectionality and Women's Agency in post-1987 coup

Intersectionality is a useful analytical tool for understanding the ways in which women's lives are affected by their location in the multiple hierarchies of identities and relations. It is applied here both as a theoretical and methodological entry point to understand power differentials, and how political resistance in relation to power differentials are built around the categorization and normative identity markers. More generally, it examines how women in Fiji, as individuals and collectives are able to negotiate the power-laden social relations and conditions in which these relations are embedded and are able to construct meaning out of them.¹⁰⁴⁹

Political Resistance

The coup fundamentally changed the atmosphere of women's activism and network, as multiracial and activist organisations like the YWCA, FWRM and FWCC came under great pressure and surveillance.¹⁰⁵⁰ Initial resistance to the coup was led by Rokotuivuna who was later arrested and detained for four days.¹⁰⁵¹ The Fiji Times carried a large photograph of her arrest above a caption which read, "*Amelia Rokotuivuna, a strong Labour Party supporter, being arrested by police at Sukuna Park after leading a march from Veiu to*

¹⁰⁴⁶ George, p.109; based on an interview with Peni Moore, first Coordinator of Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM).

¹⁰⁴⁷ Lateef, p. 123

¹⁰⁴⁸ Lateef, p.123

¹⁰⁴⁹ Lykke, p. 51

¹⁰⁵⁰ Riles, p. 31

¹⁰⁵¹ Griffen, 1991: p.1

*Sukuna Park on Sunday.*¹⁰⁵² Nicholl who carried out an analysis of how women are portrayed in the media following a coup, noted the missed opportunities by the media seeing that this was the first protest march against the 1987 coup, yet no information was given about the purpose of the march, the demands of the protestors, or even a background information on Rokotuivuna and what happened to her after her arrest.¹⁰⁵³

A woman's ability to express her agency reflects partly on the foundations laid early in her life, often starting at childhood.¹⁰⁵⁴ Rokotuivuna was described "as a woman ahead of her time" by Narsey, for her exceptional ability to stand up for her views and express agency, which can be considered radical in the face of a conservative patriarchal dominated society:

It is not easy, in a small society, to hold views that are different from your social group, especially when you are ahead of your time. It is not easy to be a Fijian socialist, feminist, multiracial radical in a society driven by our potent mixture of patriarchal communalism and capitalism. Yet Amelia, who lived her early years under the harsh conditions of the Vatukoula gold mines where her father was a cook, did all that, and more.¹⁰⁵⁵

As an indigenous Fijian woman, Rokotuivuna utilised (though not deliberately) her privileged position as a member of the dominant ethnic group, to resist and speak out against the racial, political and economic injustices of the coups. Amelia had grown up being exposed to different cultures and communities in the multi-racial industrial setting of the Vatukoula goldmines, attended mixed schools and the Adi Cakobau School, an elite boarding school for Fijian girls, and had a solid grasp of inter-ethnic relations that left her unconvinced with the justification of the coups on indigenous rights.

Similarly, a Fijian woman interviewee with a similar outlook and background had shared why she disagreed with the use of race to support the coup, based on her religious perspective as a Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) observer:

It was difficult for my family to observe Saturday worship in the village proper, so we had to move to my grandfather's 'tokatoka' (extended family) land,

¹⁰⁵² Fiji Times, 21 May 1987;

¹⁰⁵³ Nicholl, R. 2008. Women, the Press and the Fiji coups d'etat. *Fiji Studies: A Journal of Contemporary Fiji*, Vol.6 (1/2): p.98;

¹⁰⁵⁴ World Development Report. 2012, p. 150

¹⁰⁵⁵ Narsey, W. 2005. *Amelia Rokotuivuna: A Light shines on*, in Fiji Times, 7 June, 2005.

which bordered the Indian settlement. Here we were free ('galala) to observe our religion without being bogged down by the traditional norms and taboos in the village. Growing up, there was a lot of sharing and exchange with the Indians on the settlement. My mother learnt how to cook spicy curry and chutney, while my father impressed upon us children, important values such as time management and saving for education which he had observed from his Indian friends. My parents were quite progressive and I learnt a lot from them about inter-racial and inter-cultural understanding, so we were comfortable in our peaceful co-existence with Indians. When the coup happened, I could not accept the racial excuses.¹⁰⁵⁶

The above account confirms that inter-racial understanding was fostered when the family moved away from the Fijian village and came into close contact with the Indo-Fijians on the settlement. It affirms Ratu Sukuna's vision that equality can only be realised when there is greater contact, as suspicion and biases against each other are put aside when there is more interaction and understanding between different groups.

Indigenous Fijian women like Rokotuivuna and Adi Kuini Bavadra wife of ousted Prime Minister Bavadra, are examples of ethnic Fijian women who worked to bridge ethnic divisions and were beacons of light in those dark days of militarised oppression. Judith Denaro also highlighted a subtle expression of agency by Fijian market women at the Suva market, who protected Indo-Fijian women under their stalls and behind their vegetables, when Fijian youths were on a rampage through Suva city, beating up Indo-Fijians in their way in the days following the coup. An Indo-Fijian man whose house was burned down, suddenly found all his Fijian workmates collecting timber and taking days off to rebuild his house.¹⁰⁵⁷ As Denaro states, "these are the real people of Fiji, the common working people, who got on fine until the politicians stirred them up."¹⁰⁵⁸

Indeed, in times of human crises, we can see the good in some people as they reach out across socially constructed divides such as ethnicity, religion, class, status and others, to stand in the gap and bring healing to divided communities. This was the example set by a group who formed the 'Back to Early May Movement' (BEMM), and coordinated activities

¹⁰⁵⁶ Female interviewee, late 50s, former civil servant, University graduate; SDA religion;

¹⁰⁵⁷ Judith Denaro, 1987; cited in de Ishtar, Z. 1994. *Daughters of the Pacific*. Melbourne: Spinifex Press; pp. 125-6

¹⁰⁵⁸ *ibid*

to support the return to democracy following the first coup.¹⁰⁵⁹ The name of the Movement was not aimed at restoring the ousted coalition government but a call for a provisional return to the 1970 constitution subject to appropriate revisions. Members of the BEMM came from diverse backgrounds and political opinions such as church leaders, public servants, academics, professionals and activists, among others.¹⁰⁶⁰ On the first anniversary of the first coup, nine women were among those who participated in a ‘peaceful anniversary lament,’ and were arrested and prosecuted for “unlawful assembly,” with some placed on a ‘black list’ that subjected them to further harassment and detainment at the airport. Despite the security risks and personal challenges, many women of all races asserted their rights within the shrinking social and political spaces to mount resistance against the oppressive conditions of militarization in post-coup Fiji.¹⁰⁶¹

Not all indigenous women were empowered to speak out however, as there were variations even among Fijian women in rural areas compared to those in urban areas. For example, a Fijian woman from the outer island visiting relatives in Suva, made the following remark when questioned about how the coups have affected women in the islands:

O kemuni ga na tiko i Suva ni cakava tiko na ‘coup.’ Keimami mai na koro toso ga na ka keimami dau cakava na veisiga, talitali, kesakesa, qaravi oga, na gone kei na matavuvuale. Dua ga na ka keimami taroga, cava na yaga ni veidigidigi, ni oti ga dua na ‘coup.’ (It’s only you people in Suva who are doing the coup. In the village we just carry on with our normal routine, weaving mats (talitali), making tapa (kesakesa), doing our traditional obligations, looking after our children, and families. But we ask, what’s the use of elections if we are going to end up having a coup?).¹⁰⁶²

Despite the claim that the coups were for the benefit of indigenous Fijians, the intersectional identity of “location” meant that Fijians who lived outside of Suva the coup centre, do not feel any benefits from the coups. They continued with their daily chores, alienated from any ‘presumed’ benefits of the coups for indigenous Fijians.

¹⁰⁵⁹ George, 2012: p. 111

¹⁰⁶⁰ Garrett, 1990: p.106

¹⁰⁶¹ Lateef, p. 127

¹⁰⁶² Personal communication with Fijian female, early 50s, rural dweller, secondary school educated, on 5/01/2015;

Leckie notes that many women bore the negative consequences of the coups as silent individuals.¹⁰⁶³ Jalal and Narsey (1997) label this as a 'culture of silence' which condemns women who are assertive, as disrespectful to those with traditional power. They argue that women's silence is due rather to a combination of many factors that include religion, culture, location, upbringing, the fear of retaliation and a lack of protection. These dynamics shape people's expectations of how an ideal female in a patriarchal society such as Fiji, should conduct herself.¹⁰⁶⁴

Furthermore, the reconstruction of the paramountcy of indigenous Fijian interests in the post-coup era heralded in a resurgence of indigenous Fijian traditionalism and nationalism,¹⁰⁶⁵ as the status and power of the traditional chiefs through the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC) was formally enhanced in the 1990 constitution. Previously, the GCC had evolved from an advisory role on indigenous Fijian interests during the colonial era, to the power to nominate 8 members to the Senate (Upper house) in the 1970 constitution.¹⁰⁶⁶ The 1990 constitution now fully recognised their role and function as the appointing authority for the President (and Commander in Chief of the FMF) and the Vice President.¹⁰⁶⁷

The official recognition of chiefly authority prompted a new emphasis on Fijian traditionalism that subjected indigenous Fijian women to greater cultural expectations of their traditional roles,¹⁰⁶⁸ and significantly weakened their struggle to achieve gender equality.¹⁰⁶⁹ In particular, colonial and traditional structures had specified roles that limited women's access to land, monetary resources and political authority.¹⁰⁷⁰

Lateef alludes to the ideology of the 'Pacific way' which is often used to justify and legitimize the structured inequalities through the ideology of the 'Pacific woman.'¹⁰⁷¹ Thus, when women in Fiji struggled for equality or demanded greater opportunities, the ideology of the 'Pacific woman' is invoked to delay or deny such opportunities. This ideology promotes the view that Pacific women are essentially different from Western women, and

¹⁰⁶³ Leckie, p. 177

¹⁰⁶⁴ Jalal, I. and Narsey, W. 1997. In *Balance*, Sept-Oct. 1997: pp 8-9

¹⁰⁶⁵ Leckie, pp. 188, 191;

¹⁰⁶⁶ S.45 of 1970 constitution specifies the role of the GCC in appointing 8 nominees to the Senate in consultation with the Governor General;

¹⁰⁶⁷ Section 3, 1990 Constitution, states: This constitution recognises the Bose Levu Vakaturaga (BLV) or Great Council of Chiefs (GCC); p. 22

¹⁰⁶⁸ See Lawson, 1991: 81-123; in Leckie, p. 188; see also Lateef, p. 122

¹⁰⁶⁹ Lateef, p.122

¹⁰⁷⁰ Leckie, p. 188

¹⁰⁷¹ Lateef, p. 122

therefore have no need of feminism, which is a foreign concept anyway. The metaphor of the Pacific woman is reinforced by a new insistence on traditionalism that is supported by hegemonic militarised masculinism. This parallels Pankhurst's (2004) observation that,

[T]he ideological rhetoric is often about 'restoring' or 'returning' to something associated with the status quo before the [coups], even if the change actually undermines women's rights and places women in a situation that is even more disadvantageous than it was in the past. This is often accompanied by imagery of the culturally specific equivalent of the woman as 'beautiful soul', strongly associating women with cultural notions of 'tradition,' 'motherhood,' and 'peace.'¹⁰⁷²

Furthermore as Leckie notes, indigenous Fijian customary and hierarchical lines of authority are not confined to traditional spheres but also permeate gender relations in paid and professional work.¹⁰⁷³ In an interview with nurses following the coups, reference was made to the rampant political and family interference in the health sector, including irregular appointments to top nursing posts and selection for training, scholarships and attending overseas workshops which are often based on clan favouritism and nepotism at the CWM hospital for instance, where "blood over merit" became the norm.¹⁰⁷⁴

The increase in patronage relations during military rule stem from rulers attempting to amass support and loyalty to legitimise their rule. When Rabuka executed his coups in the name of indigenous Fijians, it begs the question as to which indigenous Fijians have actually benefited from his coups. Lateef questions whether the term "indigenous Fijian" is actually a synonym for indigenous Fijian male.¹⁰⁷⁵ This is a valid line of questioning as indigenous people must not blindly follow those in authority but begin to question the cost and benefits (who loses and who benefits) of the coups to individuals and collectively.

¹⁰⁷² Pankhurst, D. 2004. The 'sex war' and other wars: towards a feminist approach to peacebuilding, in H. Afshar and D. Eade (eds.), *Development, Women, and War: Feminist perspectives*. Oxford: Oxfam; in Al-Ali, N. 2005, p. 742;

¹⁰⁷³ Leckie, 2001: p. 188

¹⁰⁷⁴ Leckie, p. 188

¹⁰⁷⁵ Lateef, p. 126

Intersectional Impact and Women's Responses to coup

The loss of democracy and the racial-motives of the coups had derailed women's efforts towards political strategizing on gender priorities.¹⁰⁷⁶ Lateef (1990) argues that the articulation and reinforcement of ethnic politics was a major setback for the women's movement, particularly in their attempt to mobilise and unite women on the basis of gender, irrespective of race.¹⁰⁷⁷ Women had retreated into racially defined identities for their own safety and security, which presented a challenge for feminists and women's organisations attempting to mobilise around a feminist/gender agenda for democracy and political stability, as necessary preconditions for the realization of women's rights.¹⁰⁷⁸

Under such fragile conditions, when gender becomes constructed and negotiated with varying degrees along racial and ethnic lines, Jalal's observation comes as no surprise when she states, "*If you ask women in Fiji what defines them most, they will say, it is our race first, then our gender.*"¹⁰⁷⁹ This also affirms the assertion by Cockburn (1999) that gender does not necessarily constitute the most significant factor, since ethnic and religious differentiation, economic class, political affiliation, and sexual orientation, also shape power hierarchies and structure political regimes and societies.¹⁰⁸⁰ These differentiating factors are in turn, gendered and are part of the specific constructs of men/masculinities and women/femininities.¹⁰⁸¹ Despite their common gender and the gains they commonly fought for prior to the coups, it becomes problematic for the women's movement when ethnic Fijian and Indo-Fijian women become divided or have the potential to be divided on the basis of race and ethnicity,¹⁰⁸² a division not of their making, but of those who wield hegemonic power and control over them.

Tensions developed between those sympathetic to the 'nationalist' cause of the coups which included ethnic Fijian women's organisations such as the *Soqosoqo Vakamarama (SSVM)*, against those committed to the rule of law such as the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) and the YWCA.¹⁰⁸³ The

¹⁰⁷⁶ Jalal, Imrana. 2002. Gender issues in post-coup d'etat Fiji: Snapshots from the Fiji Islands. Keynote address given at the Townsville International Women's Conference, James Cook University, Australia, 6 July 2002, p.1;

¹⁰⁷⁷ Lateef, 1990: p. 125

¹⁰⁷⁸ Jalal, 2002: p. 1

¹⁰⁷⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰⁸⁰ Cockburn, C. 1999: p. 3 as cited in Al-Ali, Nadej. 2005. Reconstructing gender: Iraqi women between dictatorships, war, sanctions and occupation. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26 (4/5); p.740

¹⁰⁸¹ Al-Ali, *ibid*

¹⁰⁸² Lateef, p. 125

¹⁰⁸³ George, 2012: p.112

appointment of a prominent *SSVM* leader and general secretary of the YWCA as the first Minister for Women in 1988¹⁰⁸⁴ was received with some indignation by pro-democracy women's groups, since the new Minister had been known to defend the cause of the coups ("*I support the cause but not the means*"),¹⁰⁸⁵ and for her notorious expression that "democracy is a foreign flower for which Fiji had the wrong soil,"¹⁰⁸⁶ which soon became a popular catch-cry for nationalists.

Within FWRM itself, tensions had developed along racial lines as ethnic Fijian members struggled to accommodate issues of ethnic identity, given FWRM's strong commitment towards the promotion of women's rights along a democratic framework.¹⁰⁸⁷ It would be a fallacy to assume however that all indigenous women supported the coup and the promotion of indigenous rights, just as there were those who struggled within their intersectional identities to make sense of what was happening around them.

Just as the women's movement was divided along pro-indigenous and pro-democracy lines, so were indigenous women split in their responses by rank and status. It soon became clear that those who were most vocal and visible in their support for the coups, stood to benefit from post-coup patronage through their own appointment or that of their male relatives to Cabinet posts or government boards on offer for "loyal" supporters. Indigenous women of rank such as Adi Kuini Bavadra, the wife of ousted Prime Minister Bavadra, and activist such as Rokotuivuna, saw through the propagations of the coups and stood firm on the rule of law and democracy by condemning the coups.

Jalal's assertion that 'race' or 'ethnicity' defines women more than gender in post-coup Fiji, risks falling into the 'homogenizing' trap that Yuval Davis (1997) warns against, which place women in an overarching category of 'woman' that fails to consider the significant differences among them.¹⁰⁸⁸ Race or ethnicity may not necessarily be the dominant identity marker of oppression that applies to all women in Fiji. Rather, for some women, religion, sexuality or class rather than race or gender, may impose greater influences on

¹⁰⁸⁴ The Ministry for Social Welfare, Women and Culture was created in 1988, a year after the coups with Finau Tabakaucoro serving as first Minister for Women.

¹⁰⁸⁵ The 'cause' being indigenous rights, and the 'means' are the coups;

¹⁰⁸⁶ George, 2012, p. 112

¹⁰⁸⁷ George, p.113

¹⁰⁸⁸ Yuval-Davis, N. 1997. *Gender and Nation*. London: Sage publications; in Paula Frederick, Harvard University, Book review [Copyright Sociological Research Online, 1997](#)

their responses to militarization, as the following interviewee reveals about the impact of religion:

I grew up in a home where my father was an SDA,¹⁰⁸⁹ a minority Christian sect in my village, while my mother was Methodist. Religion defined what I can eat or drink, what I can do and when, since we observed Sabbath from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday, when most fun and stuff are happening. As members of a minority religion that worshipped on Saturday, we were often ridiculed by our relatives and friends, majority of whom worshipped on Sunday. Also, we do not observe many of the Fijian cultural traditions such as feasts or funeral taboos, no kava drinking, no pork, no smoke. So, already we feel 'different' and are treated as "different" in our village. When the 1987 coup happened, I questioned how the coup makers could say they were doing it for the Fijian people. Because when they enforced the Sunday observance decree, it affected us Adventists and we are Fijians too. It restricted our movement and work since Sunday is the first working day for us. We also believe that the enforcement of the Sunday law will be a sign of the end times, so this prophesy was happening right before our very eyes. That's why I don't support the coups but see it as ignorance about the role of religion to prepare us for the end-times and the *after*-life. What is the use of fighting over land which we don't even use, when we will leave everything behind?¹⁰⁹⁰

For this interviewee, religion shaped and defined her response to the coups and militarization more than her race, gender or class. She also pointed to two contradictions that made her oppose the Sunday observance decree:

it gives a distorted view about the nature of God who gives everyone the freedom of choice and does not force us to worship him, and there is no evidence in the Bible for Sunday sabbath worship.¹⁰⁹¹

Evidently, the interviewee was able to evoke her religious ideology to make sense of what was happening around her and to cope with the injustice of the coups on her life and family.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Seventh-day Adventist, a minority Christian sect that (like Judaism) observes Saturday, the Biblical instituted Sabbath as the day of worship, and believes in the second coming of Jesus Christ;

¹⁰⁹⁰ Fijian female interviewee, late 50s, former civil servant, University graduate; SDA observer;

¹⁰⁹¹ Ibid; see also Halapua, 2003: p. 176

While she identified with the coup makers in terms of her race and ethnicity, she felt totally alienated and discriminated against because of her religion. Shields (2008) contends that an intersectional position may be disadvantaged relative to one group, but advantageous relative to another.¹⁰⁹² The interviewee had a privileged position (opportunity) in terms of her race as a Fijian, but she was disadvantaged (oppressed) for belonging to a minority religion (SDA), since the post-coup conditions favoured the dominant Methodist Fijians who worshipped on Sunday. While being mindful not to homogenize race and religion, I argue that the Sunday decree may not necessarily be acceptable to all Methodists, since Indo-Fijian Methodists may have sympathy towards members of their own race compared to the radical Fijian members of the Methodist church. Furthermore, members of other denominations who observe Sunday worship such as Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterian and others, may prefer to observe Sunday however they wished rather than being homogenised by being part of the Sunday worshippers.

Violence against women (VAW)

Emberson-Bain argues that in a post-coup political environment marked by authoritarianism, women's vulnerabilities accentuate and levels of violence increase.¹⁰⁹³ This was evident in the marked increase in rape and indecent assaults on women.¹⁰⁹⁴ Within two years of the 1987 coups, the FWCC had noted a six-fold increase in violence and sexual attacks against women, with a majority of incidents brought to the Centre not reported to police.¹⁰⁹⁵ In the first four months of 1988 alone, the number of reported rape cases (47) received by the Police was equivalent to the total number of rapes for the previous year.¹⁰⁹⁶ Further concerns were raised by the women's organisations that in cases of rape and sexual assault against indigenous Fijian women that were reported to police and successfully ended up in court, the courts were accepting the Fijian custom of '*bulubulu*,' (a presentation of traditional apology to the female victim's family), as a mitigating factor for reduced sentencing.¹⁰⁹⁷

¹⁰⁹² Shields, p.302

¹⁰⁹³ Emberson-Bain, 1992 as cited in George, p. 113

¹⁰⁹⁴ Lateef, p.119

¹⁰⁹⁵ Griffen, in Dé Ishtar, Z., 1994. *Daughters of the Pacific* (North Melbourne: Spinifex Press).

¹⁰⁹⁶ Source: Incidence of reported cases of rape, etc, 1983-1988; statistics supplied to the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) by the Fiji Police Force, cited in Lateef, pp. 119-120;

¹⁰⁹⁷ Emberson-Bain, 1992: pp 153-54; as cited in George, p. 113; The concern about *bulubulu*, is that the female victim has no say in the outcome of the traditional apology process, as the practice is performed by the male relatives of the perpetrator to seek the forgiveness of male relatives of the female victim. The key issue is to restore the cordial relations and thus the equilibrium of relations between the two families or tribes (of perpetrator and victim), so the

Women's groups also reported increased incidence of domestic violence.¹⁰⁹⁸ Lateef contends that economic hardship, uncertainty, tension, and anxiety in the post-coup period contributed to domestic tensions and accompanying violence against women.¹⁰⁹⁹ Streets were less safe in the post-coup period, resulting in greater spatial confinement of women. While violence against women prevailed across race, ethnicity and class, Lateef asserts that the wider context of fear in post-coup Fiji had greater implications for Indo-Fijians¹¹⁰⁰ due to the racial motivation for the coup in the name of indigenous rights. Thus, race-motivated attacks were influenced by ethno-nationalist and militarised aggression as manifested in vandalism, arson, and abduction.¹¹⁰¹

The articulation of ethnic politics created uncertainty, suspicion and fear between the two major races, leading to families (mostly male relatives) imposing tighter controls on women's occupational and spatial mobility.¹¹⁰² Control was also maintained through psychological and physical abuse. Lateef (1990) identifies the 'threat and use of physical violence against wives as a powerful and effective mechanism for ensuring the maintenance and reproduction of traditional gender relations among Indo-Fijians,' which could easily apply to ethnic Fijians as well as other ethnic groups.¹¹⁰³

Despite the increasing number of women joining the labour market, women still went through the 'double' jeopardy of performing their gendered domestic roles in addition to paid work and often get punished with violence when they fall short of men's expectations, who would become angry over the disruption to women's gender roles. In a patriarchal society where masculinity is linked to aggression, Anwary contends that a husband considers it his right to punish his wife whenever she fails to perform her gender roles of motherhood or to meet his emotional and sexual needs as a wife.¹¹⁰⁴ Even when a man loses his job, he may resort to violence to assert his heterosexual male privilege as husband, by denigrating any alternative identity such as a reversed role of dependence.¹¹⁰⁵ In some

female victim's feelings or forgiveness is not sought. In traditional society, rape of a woman could lead to war as it was seen as affront to the male members of her tribe because she was regarded as their property.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Lateef, p.120

¹⁰⁹⁹ Ibid

¹¹⁰⁰ Leckie, p.187

¹¹⁰¹ George, 2012: p.113

¹¹⁰² Lateef, p.120

¹¹⁰³ Lateef, p.43

¹¹⁰⁴ Anwary, A. 2015. Construction of hegemonic masculinity: violence against wives in Bangladesh. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 50: p.37

¹¹⁰⁵ Anwary, p. 37

cases where husbands are made redundant, they abandon their wives and families or leave for overseas with promises of cash remittances and future emigration for family members, which may never happen.¹¹⁰⁶

The coups also took its toll on families of members of the security forces. An interviewee whose husband was a police officer shared that she was subjected to physical violence and treated like a punching bag, whenever he came home stressed out from the long hours of work following the coups. She admits that many wives of police and military officers faced similar violence, as their husbands sacrificed long hours to enforce the decrees and provided extra security at checkpoints, curfews and roadblocks during odd hours.¹¹⁰⁷

In retrospect, the establishment of the two feminist organisations FWCC and FWRM was timely, as they provided a major outlet for women to cope with the social, economic and political impacts of the coups. Reddy applauds the role of FWCC Coordinator Shamima Ali as a “bold and vocal exponent of women’s rights,” while FWRM founding member Imrana Jalal, committed her exceptional legal expertise and skills to bring women’s issues to the centre-stage.¹¹⁰⁸ Their contributions in highlighting the rights of women also sparked the irritation and opposition of conservative Fijian men who saw them as “troublemakers.”¹¹⁰⁹ A Fijian chief and member of the Senate for example, publicly stated that activists who promoted political equality for all women, “made him feel like raping women.”¹¹¹⁰ When Rabuka was asked about the Sunday observance decree, he was reported to have joked that men could use those idle hours on Sunday to kick “a football or one’s wife around.”¹¹¹¹ This type of statement legitimises and normalises the contemptuous and proprietorial attitudes men have towards women, which reveal a lurking hegemonic masculinity among men in leadership positions.¹¹¹² As George affirms,

Together, these statements demonstrate the depth of chauvinistic thinking amongst the country’s political leaders. Beyond their off-hand ‘normalisation’ of

¹¹⁰⁶ Lateef, p. 119

¹¹⁰⁷ Female interviewee, 70s, professional woman, University graduate, Methodist

¹¹⁰⁸ Reddy, p. 153

¹¹⁰⁹ Reddy, p. 154

¹¹¹⁰ Fiji Times, 2 May 1995; cited in George, p. 114

¹¹¹¹ Pacific Islands Monthly (PIM), May 1994:32; cited in George, p.113

¹¹¹² George, p.113

gender violence, they also issued sexualised threats against those women who were critical of the systems which upheld patriarchal privilege in their society.¹¹¹³

While the Crisis Centre was initially set up to provide support for victims of domestic and sexual violence, it was increasingly called upon to address the problems of poverty and destitution that accompanied the various forms of violence experienced by women,¹¹¹⁴ stressing out its limited resources. Mass unemployment, pay cuts and job losses as a consequence of the economic downturn of the coups, led to increased demand for government assistance which compelled the government to set up a Poverty Task force by 1991, to identify the extent of poverty and how to overcome it.¹¹¹⁵ Military spending however, more than doubled during the post-coup period, which indicated the interim government's prioritisation of militarization compared to the wellbeing of the people.¹¹¹⁶ While the budget for welfare assistance increased from \$2.5 to \$5 million during this period,¹¹¹⁷ the military budget rose from \$16.52 million in 1986 to \$31.25 million after the coups, accounting for 7 percent of the total government budget.¹¹¹⁸

Having started off as a voluntary organization which depended on isolated pockets of funding from various donors, the Crisis Centre received a breakthrough in the mid-1990s with guaranteed core-funding from the Australian Government through AusAID to cover programmes to address violence against women in Fiji and the Pacific region.¹¹¹⁹

At the same time, many families could not afford to meet the costs of their children's education, preferring instead to keep them at home, especially the girls, out of fear for their safety.¹¹²⁰ As Lateef iterates,

Any gains women have made previously through increased participation in education are now severely threatened. Confronted with the harsh economic

¹¹¹³ George p. 114

¹¹¹⁴ Lateef, p. 119; George, p. 113

¹¹¹⁵ Tagicakibau, E. 1995. Unpublished M.A. thesis. Income security in Fiji: Gender, Race and Class issues, p. 68

¹¹¹⁶ George, 2012 p. 114

¹¹¹⁷ Tagicakibau, p.68

¹¹¹⁸ Halapua, 2003: p. 52

¹¹¹⁹ Kotoisuva, Edwina. 2007. Fiji Women's Crisis Centre: Organising against Violence Against Women (VAW), Paper presented at Workshop 9 on Violence against Women. 10th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, Noumea: SPC; p.2

¹¹²⁰ Emberson-Bain, 1989: p.29; cited in Lateef, p. 119

choice of educating either the male or female child, the cultural choice is almost always in favour of the male.¹¹²¹

The impact of the coups on ordinary citizens were felt by all members of the family, male and female, young and old alike. Under the harsh economic, social and political conditions, the female gender as represented by women's organisations, attempted within their limited resources and spaces, to exercise agency and help alleviate the suffering of those affected.

Women's Political Agency

Women's political agency enables women to have a voice and platform to influence policy through mobilisation and political engagement in collective action.¹¹²² George notes that, "the punitive nature in which political power was being exercised, coupled with a potent hegemonic masculinist indigenous nationalism,"¹¹²³ severely threatened women's attempts to advance their status. Under such oppressive conditions, women's activism and advocacy to advance their status were "easily dismissed as a seditious attempt to sabotage Fiji's national interests," which "severely constrained the political space available to women's organizations."¹¹²⁴

A lasting legacy of the post-coup interim military regime was its creation of a Ministry for Women, and the subsequent appointment of a pro-coup indigenous woman as the first Minister for Women. The women's ministry however, was lumped together in stereotypical fashion with a broad portfolio that included Social Welfare and Culture, as if to reinforce the association of women with welfare and culture. While critics saw the establishment of the Ministry as a calculated move by the military regime to portray itself as progressive and forward-looking,¹¹²⁵ it also confirmed the observation that a 'militarised masculinity' as the dominant post-coup model of masculinity, requires a feminine complement, as seen in the recruitment of women into the military, and the creation of a separate Ministry for Women. The new Minister for Women however, was subject to constant criticism for her 'pro-coup' public proclamations, and her outrageous decision not to push the cause of women at the expense of the national interest, and even her

¹¹²¹ Lateef, p. 119

¹¹²² WDR, 2012, p. 150

¹¹²³ George, 2012: p. 117

¹¹²⁴ *ibid*

¹¹²⁵ Teaiwa, 2008: p.124

misguided support for women's recruitment into the military at a time when women's groups were protesting against the increased militarization of Fiji.¹¹²⁶

While people yearned to return to the ordinary, peaceful pre-coup life without curfews, roadblocks, checkpoints, decrees, human rights abuses, black list, and public display of gun-toting men in military uniforms, the emotional upheavals of the coups heralded in a new experience of militarisation in Fijian society, particularly when the military had been a distant observer in the past.¹¹²⁷ As Griffen observes, the arbitrary use of force, control of movement and assembly, beatings and harassment of citizens, and the imposition of repressive laws led to increased awareness of the reality of military rule in Fiji.¹¹²⁸ The choice of maintaining passive resistance to help cope with the situation and the potential violence as a deterrent, convinced women resisters to withdraw from active opposition to the regime,¹¹²⁹ and to adopt a more "gentle" approach.¹¹³⁰

Despite operating under the racially suppressive 1990 constitutional framework, the resumption of parliamentary democracy following the first post-coup elections in 1992 and the snap elections in 1994, paved the way for women's groups to regroup and reassert their activities. At the same time, women took advantage of two key catalysts at local and global level, to claim their space for political advocacy and leadership.¹¹³¹ The post-coup hard-line stance by Rabuka and his government had begun to thaw following the 1992 election and the 1994 by-election, and women took full advantage of these changes. Even Rabuka's political survival now depended on his ability to reach out and make compromises with Indo-Fijian-led political parties that he had ousted in the coups, such as the FLP and the NFP.

¹¹²⁶ Lateef, p. 125

¹¹²⁷ Griffen, 1991: p. 3

¹¹²⁸ Griffen, p.4

¹¹²⁹ *ibid*

¹¹³⁰ George, p.223

¹¹³¹ George, p. 115

Reform-Oriented Agency: Local and Global Catalysts

Constitutional Review Commission 1995

The most significant move that the Rabuka government made at national level by the mid-1990s, was to commission an independent process towards a constitutional review.¹¹³² In March 1995, the President Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara established a Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) and appointed three members of the Commission which included Maori and former New Zealand Governor General Sir Paul Reeves as Chairman¹¹³³ (thus labelled the 'Reeves Commission'), former Alliance Minister Mr Tomasi Vakatora,¹¹³⁴ and academic Dr Brij Lal,¹¹³⁵ representing the NFP. Despite the lack of gender balance in the Commission, the process presented women's groups with an opportunity to press for changes to the laws and practices that discriminated against women.¹¹³⁶

The FWRM began lobbying the state to take a greater role in the regulation of discriminatory practices at different levels.¹¹³⁷ It spearheaded a campaign to change citizenship laws that discriminated against women, through a network of sixteen women's organisations called the Women's Citizenship Rights Coalition.¹¹³⁸ Both the 1970 and 1990 constitutions had citizenship clauses that granted full citizenship rights to children born outside of Fiji whose "fathers" were Fiji citizens, and granted "foreign" wives of male citizens the right to apply for Fiji citizenship, which did not apply equally to Fiji women married to foreigners.¹¹³⁹ FWRM argued that the provisions were clearly discriminatory against women and contributed to the 'brain drain' of professional local women married

¹¹³² George, p.141

¹¹³³ Sir Paul Reeves, an Anglican priest and former Governor General of New Zealand under the Lange (Labour) government from Nov. 1985 to Nov. 1990, was of Pakeha (father) and Maori descent through his mother who was of *Te Ati Awa iwi*.

¹¹³⁴ Mr Vakatora was a former Alliance Cabinet Minister and Speaker of Parliament while Dr Brij Lal was an eminent Indo-Fijian scholar and academic based at the Australian National University. Their appointments can be perceived as an attempt to strike a balance between the pro Fijian and Indo-Fijian supporters; see George, 2012, p. 141.

¹¹³⁵ The Reeves Commission was appointed to review the Fiji Constitution and produce a report on 30 June 1996, which was later extended to 30 September 1996, "recommending constitutional arrangements which will meet the present and future needs of the people of Fiji and promote racial harmony, national unity and the economic and social advancement of all communities," see Reeves, Vakatora and Lal, 1996:p.2;

¹¹³⁶ George, p.141

¹¹³⁷ Reddy, pp.158-159

¹¹³⁸ George, p.142

¹¹³⁹ S.23, Ch. III (Citizenship) of the 1970 Constitution, states that any woman who marries a person who is a citizen of Fiji is entitled to become a citizen upon making an application; s.25, CH.IV of the 1990 constitution states that any person born outside of Fiji shall become a citizen if...his father is a citizen, p.53;

to foreigners and are forced by this provision to remain outside of Fiji.¹¹⁴⁰ It also gave foreign women married to Fiji male citizens more rights than Fiji women. Citizenship coalition members were actively encouraged to make submission to the Reeves Commission throughout Fiji, to the extent that wherever the Commission convened its public hearings, women's groups were present to make submissions on the discriminatory citizenship laws.¹¹⁴¹ Women's groups were encouraged to express their agency by taking full advantage of the opportunity to make submissions to the CRC on issues they faced on a daily basis including domestic and sexual violence and discriminatory practices in the workplace.¹¹⁴²

Reddy notes that the constitution review exercise took place in an atmosphere of dialogue, compromise and widespread consultation.¹¹⁴³ When the final recommendations of the Reeves Commission were presented to the President in September 1996, the women's movement had great cause for celebration as the discriminatory provisions of the citizenship law had been removed and a Bill of Rights clearly outlawed discrimination on the basis of race, religion, age, sex and gender.¹¹⁴⁴

Finally, after ten long years of women's struggle for the restoration of democracy, Parliament unanimously passed the 1997 constitution. Imrana Jalal, feminist lawyer and the prime mover of the FWRM's citizenship rights coalition aptly stated that, "[C]oalitions work when specific critical issues are identified and women can find the commonalities that unite."¹¹⁴⁵ Indeed, it took the concerted action and agency by key women's groups and individuals to be able to arrive at a common ground they could all be proud of.

Global catalyst: CEDAW Ratification 1995

Another impetus that provided the women's movement with an opportunity to express agency in the mid-1990s, was a collaborative effort towards the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) by the Fiji government. This international treaty was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979, and sixteen years later with the fourth World Conference on Women

¹¹⁴⁰ Goodwillie and Kaloumaira, 2000; cited in George, p. 141

¹¹⁴¹ George, p. 142

¹¹⁴² Reddy, 2012: p.158

¹¹⁴³ *ibid*

¹¹⁴⁴ Reddy, 2012: p. 158; George, p.142

¹¹⁴⁵ Jalal, 2002: p.4

due to begin in Beijing, China in September 1995, it was an opportune time to push the Fiji government to ratify CEDAW.

FWRM again became the secretariat for the local CEDAW committee which comprised other Suva-based women's organisations. A series of meetings took place between government representatives and the committee, and following a two-day convention in April 1995, Fiji acceded to CEDAW in August 1995 just days before the Beijing conference began.¹¹⁴⁶ Fiji had acceded with two reservations however, on article 5 (a) which obliges states to eliminate customary practices that are prejudicial towards women, and article 9 which requires that women and men be granted equal citizenship rights. These reservations reflected post-coup sensitivity to questions about the discriminatory aspects of custom, citizenship and land rights entitlements for women.¹¹⁴⁷ These reservations became redundant following the adoption of the 1997 constitution with a Bill of rights that prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender or sex.¹¹⁴⁸ While the media lauded the ratification of CEDAW as an indication of Fiji's commitment to equality of rights and respect for human dignity, the timing of ratification was perceived as an attempt by Rabuka's government to gain political credibility internationally.¹¹⁴⁹

Nevertheless, the agency played by leading individuals and women's groups in Fiji towards Fiji's accession to CEDAW, also saw Fiji become the first Pacific island state to ratify CEDAW (1995), and the first Pacific state to deliver a country report to the UN CEDAW Commission seven years later in 2002.¹¹⁵⁰

Global and Transnational catalyst: Beijing Conference for Women 1995

A second global catalyst that motivated local advocacy and agency among women's groups was the local preparation towards the 4th UN Conference for Women in Beijing, China from September 4 to 15, 1995.

The 1980s saw the rise of "women in development" (WID) as a major international concern, in which women's issues became integrated as issues of 'development.'¹¹⁵¹ The late Pakistani economist and diplomat, Mahbub ul Haq who coined the term 'human

¹¹⁴⁶ George, p. 115

¹¹⁴⁷ FWCC, 1995; George, p. 116

¹¹⁴⁸ George, p.116

¹¹⁴⁹ Daily Post, 14 Aug 1995; cited in George, p. 115

¹¹⁵⁰ George, p.221

¹¹⁵¹ Riles, p. 32

development,' stated that the objective of development is "to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives,"¹¹⁵² which encompasses the 'agency' of making choices to improve one's destiny.

Prior to the 1987 coups, the women's movement in Fiji was on the move, initiating activities and programs that heralded in a lot of changes for women.¹¹⁵³ In 1985, Adi Kuini Bavadra whilst a senior civil servant, had led the Fiji government delegation to the 3rd UN Conference for Women in Nairobi. Pacific delegates to previous UN conferences on women had noted with concern the poor visibility of Pacific women's representation at international gatherings. This had prompted the Women's Bureau of the South Pacific Commission (now Pacific Community) to work with national women's machineries (Ministry of Women) to produce a Pacific Platform for Action (PPA) for the advancement of Pacific women. It was hoped that the creation of a Pacific document would increase the profile of Pacific women and their agency (capacity) to inform global debate.¹¹⁵⁴ Ten years later in 1995, as Fiji women galvanised for the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing, there was a generally positive mood which George aptly captures, "a greater sense of energy became apparent in these deliberations as governments and non-government representatives worked towards the production of a PPA for women's advancement,"¹¹⁵⁵ which was endorsed by Pacific states in May 1994. Riles notes that in the Fiji women's preparations for Beijing,

an entirely new cadre of women came to the forefront- educated, professionals and persons with institutional experience in fields unrelated to women and activism, much more skilled in interfacing with aid agencies on these organisations' terms, accustomed to travel and life overseas, knowledgeable about the procedures of the UN and other international institutions, and less interested in the overt politicisation of causes.¹¹⁵⁶

The Fiji Department for Women and Culture worked on a daily basis to coordinate and prepare for national, regional and international consultations. It was a tremendous boost to the non-government organisations when the senior government official tasked with

¹¹⁵² United Nations. 2011. What is Human Development? in www.un.org/disabilities/documents/idpd/idpd2011_hdr.ppt

¹¹⁵³ Lateef, 1990: p.123;

¹¹⁵⁴ See Fairburn-Dunlop, 2005; cited in George, p. 119

¹¹⁵⁵ George, p. 119

¹¹⁵⁶ Riles, p.

coordinating and leading the preparations for Beijing in the Department, was also elected President of the National Council of Women, which made it easier for local NGOs and the Pacific NGO Coordinating Group for the Beijing Conference, to be privy to government information.¹¹⁵⁷ Around fifty Suva-based networks and organisations participated in the preparations for Beijing, almost all of whom had emerged in the previous ten years as a result of the new prioritization of WID funding, which paralleled a dramatic increase in focus on WID throughout the developing world.¹¹⁵⁸ For the first time therefore, both the government and Fiji women's NGOs were well represented at the 4th World Conference for Women in Beijing, through funding provided by the Australian government's aid agency, AUSAID.¹¹⁵⁹

In total, twelve critical areas of concern¹¹⁶⁰ were identified for women's overall development in the Women's Plan of Action (WPA) as the outcome document from Beijing. To give effect to the commitments made by the Fiji government at the Beijing Conference, a Women's Plan Action (WPA) was launched in 1998 by the Ministry of Women and Culture focusing on Fiji's five priority issues. These included: mainstreaming women and gender concerns, review of laws that are disadvantageous to women, micro-enterprise development for women, violence against women and children, and gender-balance partnership in decision-making. The Plan of action called for a coordinated approach by the government, civil societies, academic institutions and the private sector to fulfil Fiji's obligations.

Following Beijing, women's advocacy and activism continued in the areas of concern not limited to the five priority areas identified in the WPA. The five critical areas of concern continued to provide a platform for women's organisations to hold the Fiji government accountable to its commitments.

¹¹⁵⁷ Riles, p. 32

¹¹⁵⁸ *ibid*, p. 36

¹¹⁵⁹ Reddy, p. 156

¹¹⁶⁰ These included: Poverty, Education, Health, Violence against women, Armed conflict, the Economy, Power and decision-making, Institutional mechanisms for women's advancement, Human rights, the Media, Environment and the Girl-child.

Political Leadership

Women's participation at high levels of decision-making particularly in Parliament, has been slow since independence when only two women served first in the Legislative Council before independence, and in the House of Representatives following independence.¹¹⁶¹ Adi Losalini Dovi served as Government Whip in the first parliament of Fiji and remained with the ruling Alliance party between 1966 and 1977.¹¹⁶² India-born Mrs Irene Jai Narayan was the only female member of the opposition National Federation Party (NFP) from independence to 1987.¹¹⁶³ As Reddy notes, until 1987 Fijian women had kept a low profile in politics but following the coup, this also changed drastically as more women came forward to assume leadership roles in politics.¹¹⁶⁴ One notable example was Adi Kuini Bavadra, who became the leader of the Fiji Labour Party (FLP) following the death in 1989 of her husband, ousted Prime Minister Dr Bavadra.¹¹⁶⁵

In the 1992 general elections, four women stood as candidates which included one Indo-Fijian and three Fijians, one of whom, Taufa Vakatale won her seat and was subsequently appointed Minister for Education, Science and Technology.¹¹⁶⁶ Ms Vakatale, a pioneer with many expressions of 'agency' through her achievements of "first" among women in Fiji,¹¹⁶⁷ stood in Rabuka's *Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei* (SVT) party ticket, and had stated in a newspaper interview, "*I saw myself as a minister, and told my constituency that I was ministerial material. I was very confident from the start that I would win.*"¹¹⁶⁸ In 1993, the

¹¹⁶¹ Reddy, Chandra. 2012. Women and politics in Fiji, in Brij. V. Lal. Fiji before the Storm: Elections and the politics of development: ANU Press; p. 149;

¹¹⁶² Adi Losalini Raravuya Dovi (nee Uluiviti), from the chiefly Tui Nairai lineage married Dr Ratu J.A.R. Dovi of Bau, Otago-graduate, medical doctor and younger brother of Fiji's great statesman Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna. Their eldest son was the late Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, Roko Tui Bau, former Vice President and High Court Judge of Fiji. Adi Losalini was a nominee of the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC) to the Legislative Council (LegCo) from 1966 to 1972, and an elected member of the House of Representatives under the Alliance Party from 1972 to 1982.

¹¹⁶³ India-born, Mrs Irene Jai Narayan was elected into the Legislative Council from 1966 to 1972 as a member of the National Federation Party (NFP), and a member of the House of Representatives between 1972 and 1987. She began her career as a high school teacher and later as a politician.

¹¹⁶⁴ Reddy, p. 154;

¹¹⁶⁵ Reddy, p. 154;

¹¹⁶⁶ Department for Women and Culture. 1994. Women of Fiji: A statistical gender profile; p.3

¹¹⁶⁷ Ms Vakatale was the first Fijian woman to be principal at ACS, served as Minister for Education, Science and Technology between 1993 to 1995, acted as Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs from April to May 1994; first woman to serve as Deputy Prime Minister 1997-1999; first Fijian woman to address the UN Gen. Assembly (1998); first Pacific Island woman to be elected to the Executive Committee of the World YWCA and its Vice President. She resigned as President of the SVT in protest against the May 2000 coup. Her most recent appointment was as a member of the Yash-Ghai led Fiji Constitutional Review Commission between 2012 to 2013;

¹¹⁶⁸ Rosi Doviverata. 2013. Taufa on Way Ahead, *in Fiji Sun*, June 13, 2013.

SVT government introduced a policy to increase women's membership on government statutory boards, committees and councils by 30 to 50 percent within five years.¹¹⁶⁹ By 2004 however, this policy had achieved only up to 22 percent representation.¹¹⁷⁰ Further gains were made by women in the 1994 election when three indigenous women were elected from the ruling SVT party, including Adi Samanunu Cakobau Talakuli, Seruwaia Hong Tiya and Taufa Vakatale who had convincingly won her seat and retained the portfolio of Education, Science and Technology.¹¹⁷¹

Apart from the key roles played by women's organizations in changing the attitudes of both men and women in society, another priority area was the need to attract, educate and train women for political leadership roles.¹¹⁷² The Fiji National Council of Women (FNCF) launched its "Women in Politics" (WIP) in 1994, to motivate and train women to actively participate in local government elections and at national Parliament levels.¹¹⁷³ With technical and funding support from the Suva-based UNIFEM (now UN Women) Pacific office under Adi Laufitu Malani, along with the women's wings of various political parties, the WIP project empowered and equipped women with political tools and campaign strategies as voters and potential candidates.¹¹⁷⁴

In the lead up to the 1999 general elections, the first under the 1997 constitution, female candidates from different political parties formed a Women's caucus to identify issues of common interest as a platform to work together across the political divide. Recognising that one of the factors that deter women from offering themselves as candidates is financial burden, FWRM launched a campaign in 1999 to assist female candidates with a "Women in Politics" (WIP) appeal, by donating \$1,000 to kickstart the fundraising.¹¹⁷⁵ Money raised was distributed equally among all women candidates irrespective of political party affiliation.¹¹⁷⁶ The initiative was appreciated and welcomed by all female

¹¹⁶⁹ Huffer, E.2004. Review of Institutional mechanisms, policies, legislation and programmes in support and promotion of gender equality in the Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa and Fiji. Pacific women's Bureau, 9th Triennial Conference of Pacific women, Nadi, Fiji; p. 43

¹¹⁷⁰ ADB Fiji Country Gender Assessment, 2004: p.44

¹¹⁷¹ Reddy, p. 154; Department of Women, p. 3

¹¹⁷² Reddy, p. 158

¹¹⁷³ ADB Fiji Country Gender Assessment, 2004: p. 44

¹¹⁷⁴ *ibid*; see also Reddy, p.158;

¹¹⁷⁵ Nicholl, Rae. 2007. Broken promises: women and the 2006 Fiji election, in Fraenkel, Jon and Stewart Firth (eds.). From Election to Coup in Fiji: The 2006 campaign and its aftermath. ANU Press: pp.168-69;

¹¹⁷⁶ *ibid*, p.169

candidates.¹¹⁷⁷ The WIP project played an important role in encouraging women to stand for elections, lobbying political parties to field more women candidates and getting more women into political positions in both local municipal government and national parliament.¹¹⁷⁸

By the May 1999 elections, women's efforts have borne fruit with 27 well-informed and empowered women candidates standing in different political parties out of a total of 251 candidates. Eight women were successful, which constituted 11.27 percent of women in Parliament, the highest at the time in any Pacific legislature.¹¹⁷⁹ Five were subsequently appointed to Cabinet, three as full Ministers, including Adi Kuini Speed (FAP)¹¹⁸⁰ as Minister for Fijian Affairs and one of two Deputy Prime Ministers, Adi Koila Nailatikau (VLV) as Minister for Tourism and Transport, Lavinia Padarath (FLP) as Minister for Women, and two Assistant ministers, which included Rotuman independent Marieta Rigamoto, as Assistant Minister for Agriculture, and Ema Tagicakibau as Assistant Minister in the Prime Minister's office. Three were backbenchers, Ofa Duncan (General Electors) who was part of the opposition, Bulou Akanisi Koroitamana (PANU) and the sole Indo-Fijian member, Suruj Mati (FLP).¹¹⁸¹

In fact, the May 1999 election results heralded in a historical and momentous occasion in the face of Fiji politics, not only because of the number of women that got elected but because of the far-reaching intersectional and shocking results. The election returned a shocking defeat for Rabuka's SVT party which had entered the elections in a coalition with NFP, which did not win a single seat. However, the election proved a landslide victory for the Fiji Labour Party which won 37 seats, and leader Mahendra Pal Chaudhry consequently became the first Indo-Fijian Prime Minister of Fiji. FLP's coalition partners also did well, including Fijian Association Party (FAP) under Adi Kuini Speed, and the Western-based Fiji Party of National Unity (PANU).

¹¹⁷⁷ Female candidate in 1999 election

¹¹⁷⁸ ADB, 2004: p. 44

¹¹⁷⁹ Huffer, 2004; cited in Asia Development Bank. 2006. Fiji Country Gender Assessment: p.44; see Reddy, p. 160, Nicholl, p.162

¹¹⁸⁰ Adi Kuini was widowed following the death of husband and former Prime Minister Bavadra in 1989, before she married Australian, Clive Speed. She successfully led the Fijian Association Party to election victory gaining 10 seats, and following a pre-election coalition with the FLP and PANU, was part of the new coalition government.

¹¹⁸¹ FAP- Fijian Association Party, FLP- Fiji Labour Party, VLV- Veitokani ni Lewenivanua Va-Karisito (Christian Democratic Party), PANU-Party of National Unity and UGP- United General Party

As the dust settled on the results of the May 1999 elections, the principles and the spirit of the 1997 Constitution were about to be tested, and much would depend on the capacity of those who have been entrusted with the mandate to carry the mantle of leadership into the new millennium.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to investigate the construction of hegemonic, militarised and ethnicised masculinities by members of the Fiji Military Force in the execution of the first military coups in 1987 and the consequent processes of militarisation. It applied a feminist gender analysis to probe the evolution and transformation of the military through its role, size, composition, recruitment and training and the factors which have influenced civil-military relations since independence. It notes that the manifestation of hegemonic masculinity by military men are reinforced by cultural values arising from the persistent parallels between the military as a hierarchical gendered institution with an overwhelming ethnic Fijian composition, and the Fijian social structure that exhibits similar hierarchical forms of masculinity. When combined with the threat of arms, such hegemonic forms of militarised and ethnicised masculinity is demonstrated through violence and aggression in the coups and its aftermath. Furthermore, this chapter notes the existence of a pattern of civil-military relations since independence that is dominated by men and intersected by race, kinship ties and status, to reinforce a patron-client relationship between the ruling chiefly class and the military, and demonstrated through the appointment of senior military officers from among these ruling families as a coup-proofing mechanism.

Women first joined the military a year after the 1987 coups, more so as an attempt by 'militarised masculinity' to have a feminine complement. However, three decades later, women and Indo-Fijians still have minimal participation, despite a UN directive to increase women's recruitment for peacekeeping, while women are still mostly found in the logistics and service posts of 'care,' with very limited chance for career advancement.

The increase in the size of the Fiji military after independence is a result of two key non-combat roles, the 'nation-building' process undertaken by the Alliance government, and particularly, its integration into the UN peacekeeping mission from 1978. The impact of peacekeeping on the nation is significant, with lasting impacts on families of peacekeepers. Negative impacts have included loss of lives and injuries, while later chapters shall reveal a best-kept secret, which is the burden of violence suffered by women and vulnerable family members and the additional roles that women had to shoulder to sustain the global

peacekeeping operations, to free up the men for deployment with long absence from home. More importantly, the links between the coups and peacekeeping suggest that Fiji's participation in peacekeeping in 'hot' spots (or trouble spots) around the world, has been counterproductive, as it has given the military the confidence and capacity to execute out the coups. The economic benefits of peacekeeping to families and as a source of revenue for the government, have been identified as positive impacts.

The second section of this chapter examines the impact of the coups and militarisation on women, and the capacity of women, as individuals and collectively as a movement, to express agency in response to the oppressive ramifications of the coups and militarisation. The diversity of women's experiences in the context of the 1987 coups is examined from an intersectional framework that probes the intersection of women's experiences of militarisation with their multiple identities and social positioning along the hierarchy of power differentials, such as gender, race and ethnicity, class and status, religion, age, and location. The capacity of women's organisations to express agency is examined in terms of their resistance and reform-orientation in three key areas: resistance to the coups and militarization, violence against women and political mobilisation for democratic changes.

This chapter highlights two critical findings of this thesis: One, that contrary to the justification of the coups on indigenous rights to restore power to the chiefs and reinforce the patronage relations between them and the military, this study highlights that the 1987 and ensuing coups actually became symptomatic of the declining power and waning influence of the Fijian chiefly elite and their institution, and the decline of its long-standing patronage relationship with the Fiji military, and its eventual dismantling following the 2006 coup. The 1987 coups marked the beginning of the end for the power of the chiefs, that was to mark a reversal of roles between the chiefs, who have now become beholden to the military and the coup makers. The second section underlines a critical finding in the application of gender intersectionality to evaluate the impact of the coups on indigenous women, that despite the justification for indigenous rights, race or ethnicity was not the principal identity marker for all indigenous women who were impacted in different ways by other social identities such as religion, location, class and status.

CHAPTER 6

GENDER CONSTRUCTION IN THE MILITARIZATION OF FIJI

May 2000 coup and hostage crisis to 2001 Elections

Introduction

The 1980s marked a significant turning point in world history in the face of rapid ethnic polarization following the break-up of former socialist states such as the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, with strong implications in geographies around the world.¹¹⁸² The end of the cold war in the late 1980s, around the time of the first military coup in 1987, saw the emergence of identity politics worldwide, with ethnic and religious polarization pervading the political domain particularly in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Latin America and Africa.¹¹⁸³

This chapter examines the construction of gender in the militarization of Fiji during Fiji's third coup in May 2000 and its aftermath. This was the second time that 'indigenous rights' was being manipulated to justify another coup. What follows is an attempt to probe critical issues surrounding the dilemma of identity politics both among and between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians, through an application of the Fijian '*taukei-vulagi*'¹¹⁸⁴(native-foreigner) ideology. The '*taukei-vulagi*' concept is examined in the way that it reduces indigenous Fijian women, and Indo-Fijian men and women to a '*vulagi*' ('foreigner-guest) status. Related identity and relationship concepts such as multiculturalism, multiracialism, ethno-nationalism, equality and difference, indigeneity and citizenship shall be juxtaposed alongside the '*taukei-vulagi*' philosophy to draw out the inter-ethnic identity issues that lie at the root of the militarization of indigenous rights in Fiji.

Following the format of the previous section, this chapter shall comprise two sections. **Section I** begins with a contextual account of the political situation following the overwhelming success of the Labour-led People's coalition government in the 1999 elections, and its overthrow by a section of the military a year later on its first anniversary

¹¹⁸² Gokalp D. 2010. A gendered analysis of violence, justice and citizenship: Kurdish women facing war and displacement in Turkey. *Women's Studies International Forum* 33 (2010): p.561;

¹¹⁸³ *ibid*

¹¹⁸⁴ See Rakuita, T. 2002. "Taukei-Vulagi Philosophy and the Coup of 19 May 2000." *Pacific Studies* 25(4):93-108;

in office on May 19, 2000. An intersectional approach is then applied to investigate the construction and reconfiguration of gender, specifically hegemonic, ethnised and militarised masculinism, which intersects with race, class and age and other social identities during the May 2000 coup and the ensuing hostage crisis, from the lens of the “*taukeivulagi*” ideology. **Section II** examines the capacity of women as individuals and as part of the women’s movement, to negotiate the power-laden social relations under the militarized and ethicised conditions, to express agency for resistance and reform.

I. THE CONTEXT: MAY 1999 ELECTION TO MAY 2000 COUP

A sense of optimism¹¹⁸⁵ prevailed over Fiji in the lead up to the 1999 elections. The post-Beijing euphoria of the mid-1990s had quietened down after women activists experienced a softening policy approach by the previously hard-line Rabuka government. This was evident in the joint collaboration between government and NGOs on Fiji’s five commitments to the Beijing Women’s Plan of Action (WPA).¹¹⁸⁶ The economy was showing positive signs of recovery since the downturn of the 1990s,¹¹⁸⁷ while race relations appeared to be on the mend following the successful constitutional review and the popular endorsement of the 1997 constitution, which had abolished the discriminatory provisions of the 1990 constitution and restored equal rights to ethnic Fijians and Indo-Fijians,¹¹⁸⁸ despite voting still being race-based.¹¹⁸⁹

The election results however delivered three huge shocks which included: a heavy loss to Rabuka’s *Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei* (SVT) with only 8 seats; an overwhelming victory for the Fiji Labour party (FLP) with an outright majority of 37 out of 71 seats; and a total wipe-out for the National Federation party (NFP) which failed to win a single seat. Labour’s Fijian coalition partners Fijian Association Party (FAP) grabbed 11 seats, Party of National unity (PANU) won 4 seats, while the *Veitokani ni Lewenivanua Va-Karisito* (VLV) or Christian Democratic Party managed 3 seats. In total, Labour with its Fijian coalition partners and one Independent amassed 56 seats out of the 71-member Parliament to form the new government. The election was historical for women as the 8 elected members represented 11.2% of Parliament, the highest proportion of women so far in the Fiji

¹¹⁸⁵ George, 2012: p. 139

¹¹⁸⁶ *ibid*

¹¹⁸⁷ See Pacnews, 9 June, 2000; Sunday Sun, June 4 2000; cited in Lal, Brij. 2012. *Madness in May: George Speight and the Unmaking of modern Fiji*, in *Fiji before the Storm*, Ch.11. Canberra: ANU Press: p. 177

¹¹⁸⁸ Lal, p. 177

¹¹⁸⁹ Jalal, 2002: p.2

Parliament. Of the 8 women, two each were from FLP and FAP, one each from PANU and VLV, one Independent from Rotuma, and one in the Opposition representing the United General party (UGP). The racial make-up of the women consisted of 5 ethnic Fijians (2 FAP, 1 FLP, 1 VLV, 1 PANU), one Indo-Fijian (FLP), one mixed race (UGP) and one Rotuman (Ind).

Labour's victory was unprecedented, as it gave Fiji its first Indo-Fijian Prime Minister, Mahendra Chaudhry. Norton (2000) describes this unexpected election results thus:

The outcome of the most remarkable parliamentary elections in Fiji's history signalled the possibility of a new phase in political development: a government responding to popular interests that cut across the ethnic divide—the lost promise of the ill-fated Bavadra government of 1987.¹¹⁹⁰

Lal (2012) identifies two factors that contributed to the Labour-coalition victory: an effective campaign against the extravagances of the Rabuka government, and a sharp and effective campaign on bread and butter issues that struck at the heart of the working and middle classes.¹¹⁹¹ Other commentators pointed to the new electoral system which was perceived to have worked in favour of the Labour-coalition Fijian parties.¹¹⁹² A successful female candidate agreed with this perception:

The 'alternative' voting system actually worked for me. The ballot paper had two parts, above the line where the voter ticks the party symbol, or below the line which had names of individual candidates. I guess most educated voters would prefer to make their individual choices below the line, but to make it easy for voters, most political parties advised them just to tick the party symbol above the line. The parties had already submitted their list of preferences and most of them had put SVT last. Under the old 'first past the post,' system, SVT would have won in the first count but they didn't get the necessary 50% +1 votes as required in the

¹¹⁹⁰ Norton, R. 2000. Understanding the results of the 1999 elections, in Lal, Brij V. *Fiji before the Storm*. Canberra: Asia Pacific Press, p. 49

¹¹⁹¹ Lal, B. 2012: p. 182

¹¹⁹² See for example, Norton, 2000: p.49; Lal, 2012: p.184;

new constitution. I had the second most votes in the first count, and after receiving the losing and eliminated candidate's votes, I won the seat on the second count.¹¹⁹³

This account confirms Lal's (2012) observation that the rest of the Fijian parties¹¹⁹⁴ had all opposed Rabuka's SVT party as the "common enemy,"¹¹⁹⁵ and put them last in their candidate vote preference. Led by Jai Ram Reddy, NFP had formed a coalition with the SVT going into the elections, but did not win a single seat. During the campaign, Fijian parties had capitalized on the SVT government's failure to improve the lot of ordinary Fijians for whom Rabuka had justified the 1987 coups, but had instead enriched themselves to the extent of bringing about the virtual collapse and bankruptcy of the Fiji National Bank.¹¹⁹⁶ Norton (2012) notes that the starkest irony of the elections was the massive popular rejection of leaders who for over four years, had played major roles in the dialogue and negotiation that enabled the reform for the post-coup Constitution.¹¹⁹⁷ The demise of the NFP, Fiji oldest party indicated that many Indo-Fijian supporters had not forgiven Rabuka for the 1987 coups and had felt betrayed by NFP's pre-election coalition with Rabuka's SVT party.¹¹⁹⁸ NFP supporters ignored the spirit of reconciliation and the principle of multiracialism that Rabuka and Reddy had invested into the 1997 review constitution.¹¹⁹⁹

Labour's victory also spelled a quandary for its Fijian coalition partners. When questioned during the election campaign as to who would become Prime Minister if the coalition won, FAP had assured supporters that a Fijian would be chosen from among the coalition partners.¹²⁰⁰ However, Chaudhry had taken the necessary steps to be sworn in as Prime Minister on the invitation of the President Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara,¹²⁰¹ despite his failure to

¹¹⁹³ Fijian female former politician, mid 50s

¹¹⁹⁴ PANU, FAP and VLV.

¹¹⁹⁵ Lal, 2012: p.184

¹¹⁹⁶ Robertson, Robbie. 2017. *The General's Goose: Fiji's Tale of Contemporary Misadventures*. Canberra: ANU Press; p. 115

¹¹⁹⁷ Norton, 2012: p. 62

¹¹⁹⁸ Lal, 2012: p.183; Norton, 2012: p. 62

¹¹⁹⁹ Norton, 2012: p. 62;

¹²⁰⁰ Personal communication with two former FAP candidates, both ethnic Fijians, one female and one male;

¹²⁰¹ Lal, 2012: p. 184

consult his coalition partners as a matter of courtesy.¹²⁰² Having assumed that the coalition would meet first to choose a Prime Minister,¹²⁰³ FAP cried foul and accused Chaudhry of reneging on a pre-election deal that a Fijian would be Prime Minister,¹²⁰⁴ especially since Labour's win was possible only through the preferential votes of its coalition partners.¹²⁰⁵ In their haste to get rid of Rabuka, it seemed that the Fijian parties had heedlessly played right into Chaudhry's hand. To appease FAP, Chaudhry offered FAP leader Adi Kuini Speed one of the co-Deputy Prime Minister roles, two other Cabinet seats and one Assistant Minister role. Of the 8 women in Parliament, 5 made it into Cabinet.

With its first Indo-Fijian Prime Minister in office, Fiji was about to test the reconciliatory and democratic principles of the 1997 constitution. Since Labour had won an outright majority, and Chaudhry's appointment as Prime Minister was in order, the President Ratu Mara urged the Fijian parties to support the new Prime Minister.¹²⁰⁶ FAP relented, recognizing that it was better to make a difference from within than causing trouble so early in the run.¹²⁰⁷ Their concern however was more to do with the assurances they had made to supporters during the campaign, on who would be Prime Minister.¹²⁰⁸ For that, FAP members were adamant that their supporters were not ready to accept an Indo-Fijian Prime Minister.¹²⁰⁹ This brings to the fore a vexing question in the context of Fijian politics and inter-racial relations: why does the race of the Prime Minister matter, even among coalition members who are supposed to be more moderate in their views? This question shall be answered later in this chapter.

People's Coalition Government: one year in office

It was assumed that all was well with the People's coalition seeing it had governed unhindered for one year. As Tuitoga recounts, "for a year the country simmered,"¹²¹⁰ until that fateful day on May 19, 2000 when Fiji "experienced anarchy on a scale never before witnessed" in history.¹²¹¹ To comprehend the events of May 2000, we need to understand what was happening to the coalition government in its first year in office. As Robertson and

¹²⁰² Fijian male, former FAP candidate

¹²⁰³ *ibid*

¹²⁰⁴ Lal, 2012: p.184

¹²⁰⁵ Former FAP candidate; see also Norton, R. 2012. Understanding the results of the 1999 Fiji elections, in Lal, B.V. Fiji Before the Storm. Canberra: ANU Press; p. 59

¹²⁰⁶ *ibid*; see also Lal, 2012, p. 184

¹²⁰⁷ Former FAP female candidate

¹²⁰⁸ Former FAP candidates

¹²⁰⁹ Personal conversation with two former FAP candidates

¹²¹⁰ Tuitoga, 2004: p. 192

¹²¹¹ Robertson and Sutherland, 2001: xv;

Sutherland (2001) observe, “ever since the May 1999 elections there had been many conspiracies to topple the Chaudhry government,” although few of them had anticipated a coup.¹²¹²

Among the conspirators were members of the SVT party who urged Rabuka to stage another coup which he refused, choosing instead to abide by the constitution which he had helped put into place.¹²¹³ The new constitutional arrangements that aimed at fostering greater communal cooperation, obliged Chaudhry to offer Cabinet seats to all parties that received 10 percent of the vote.¹²¹⁴ His offer of three seats to SVT was met by a demand for four seats instead, including key portfolios.¹²¹⁵ Rather than negotiate further, Chaudhry froze SVT out, which “proved a costly mistake.”¹²¹⁶ Chaudhry would have strategically calmed the political climate had he adopted the conciliatory spirit of the 1997 constitution, by including SVT in his Cabinet. Instead, he helped to fuel the fire of his opponents who resurrected the very politics of race and ethnicity that the new constitution had hoped to avoid.¹²¹⁷ Rabuka was equally to blame for choosing not to negotiate further with Chaudhry, opting instead to put SVT in the Opposition. He then chose to retire from politics to chair the Great Council of Chiefs, leaving as Leader of the Opposition, former Minister and fellow Cakaudrove member, Inoke Kubuabola.¹²¹⁸ Under those conditions, Parliament returned to the normative race-based confrontational politics of ‘us versus them,’ ‘Fijian versus Indian,’ that the 1997 constitution had sought to avoid. This perception was to dominate the tone of debate and the face of politics in the one year that the coalition government was in office.

A further disadvantage for the Coalition government was that, “almost from the start Chaudhry fell out with the media,” particularly the Fiji Times, the major English language daily newspaper.¹²¹⁹ Based on a campaign of “bread and butter” issues, Labour had promised to roll back on unemployment caused by structural adjustment and privatization reforms of the Rabuka government which were part of loan conditions imposed by global

¹²¹² Robertson and Sutherland, 2001: p.5

¹²¹³ *ibid*

¹²¹⁴ Fiji Islands Constitution Amendment Act, 1997. [1997 Constitution]. Part 3-Cabinet Government, Section 99 (5) -(9);

¹²¹⁵ Robertson, et.al. p.5

¹²¹⁶ *ibid*

¹²¹⁷ Robertson, et.al. p.5

¹²¹⁸ Robertson et.al, pp.5-6

¹²¹⁹ Robertson, et.al. p. 5

financial institutions such as the World Bank and IMF.¹²²⁰ These reforms had resulted in massive job losses and redundancy for employees in public utilities and services that were being privatised.¹²²¹ The coalition government had also promised to introduce minimum wages, lower interest rates on housing so ordinary people could access affordable housing, provide social security for the elderly and promised to resolve the long festering issue of expiring agricultural leases.¹²²² These electoral-appealing policies caused the government to embark on a swift program of legislative reform, to the extent that while the appearance of change was impressive, it also embroiled the government in unnecessary tussle with a “hostile” media, in which “small things were magnified in an atmosphere already rife with suspicion and distrust about government’s motives.”¹²²³ Chaudhry’s continuous tussle with the media revealed an overly sensitive government that was unable to cope with even minor criticism as it “tackled too many well-entrenched interests too quickly.”¹²²⁴

Another factor which galvanized the opposition was Chaudhry’s own forceful and uncompromising (confrontational to his opponents) personality, forged through long years spent in the trade union movement.¹²²⁵ Chaudhry had long been a thorn on the side of the Rabuka government, a champion for ‘equality at all costs’ which could be perceived as racist by Fijians in the opposition, who mistrusted him and saw his “imprint” on every policy of the government.¹²²⁶ The attitude of his Ministers did not help either, as a former civil servant recounted for example that an Indo-Fijian minister in the coalition government was in the habit of addressing Fijian civil servants as, “Hey you,” which they considered rude and *viavalevu* (disrespectful).¹²²⁷

The fractious nature of the coalition itself was a critical factor that had beset the coalition government from the outset. It was a loose coalition of four political parties including Labour, FAP, PANU and VLV, some with contradictory philosophies.¹²²⁸ The VLV for example, wanted Fiji to be declared a Christian state, the Sunday observance decree reinstated, and an urgent review of the 1997 constitution to address the concerns of the

¹²²⁰ International Monetary Fund

¹²²¹ Lal, 2012: p. 183; Robertson and Sutherland, 2001: p. 8

¹²²² Lal, p. 183

¹²²³ *ibid*

¹²²⁴ Robertson and Sutherland, 2001: p. 8

¹²²⁵ Lal, p. 183

¹²²⁶ Lal, p. 184

¹²²⁷ In a *Talanoa session* and personal conversation with a Fijian female former civil servant, in her early 30s at the time of the 2000 coup; December 2014;

¹²²⁸ Lal, p. 184

Fijian people.¹²²⁹ PANU had its own agenda for western Fiji, with members hoping that the party would at last, address its long history of marginalization by the eastern chiefs that had ruled Fiji since Independence.¹²³⁰

FAP had its own internal leadership struggle, with a faction rallying against Adi Kuini as Party leader, while openly expressing preference for Bau chief, Ratu Tu'uakitau Cokanauto. Things came to a head when Adi Kuini, who was away in Australia for medical treatment, appointed Minister for Health, Dr Isimeli Cokanasiga as acting Party leader, overlooking the popular Bau chief. The leadership issue became an on-going tussle between Adi Kuini's faction in Senate and cabinet who represented urban seats against Ratu Cokanauto's faction who went as far as to support Speight's coup.¹²³¹ Meanwhile, NFP which for so long had championed Indo-Fijian interests, had without a single seat in Parliament, "kept the government's heel close to the fire."¹²³²

Chaudhry could not understand why indigenous Fijians remained poor when they owned 83% of the land. His government's proposal for a Land Use Commission (LUC) to work with landowners to identify idle land and put them to productive use, including where possible, the resettlement of displaced Indo-Fijian tenants, was regarded with suspicion from a "race-based" lens, despite its good intentions. Much to the consternation of the Minister of Agriculture, malicious misinformation was spread among Fijian landowners by the opposition SVT party that the Land Use Commission was a ploy by Chaudhry to bring in more Indians to Fiji, which would turn Fiji into a 'little India.'¹²³³

Hence, in its first year in office, the people's coalition government was hedged in from all quarters, battered by the media, hammered by opponents and hobbled by internal divisions.¹²³⁴ Influential members of the indigenous political establishment continually sought to undermine its legitimacy.¹²³⁵ As a former member of the Chaudhry Cabinet stated, "the government had very little chance against the prophets of doom in the opposition, which exploited all avenue even through the provincial councils to spread lies about the intentions of the government."¹²³⁶ From the perspective of the opposition, the

¹²²⁹ Lal, 2012: p. 184;

¹²³⁰ Lal, p. 184; Robertson et.al. p. 6;

¹²³¹ Personal account of former FAP member, Fijian female; see also Lal, 2012: p. 184;

¹²³² Lal, p. 183

¹²³³ Lal, p. 185; Personal conversation with former FAP member;

¹²³⁴ Lal, p. 184

¹²³⁵ George, 2012. 146

¹²³⁶ Personal conversation with former Cabinet Minister in Chaudhry government, Fijian female in her late 60s;

Chaudhry government had to go before it managed to entrench itself.¹²³⁷ And so it was, on May 19 2000, the first anniversary of the coalition government that,

George Speight and six gunmen once again interrupted democracy by hijacking the parliament, holding the Prime Minister and his government political prisoners and tearing up a constitution, once so widely praised which had brought to power a multiracial People's Coalition.¹²³⁸

The next section shall examine how gender is constructed and demonstrated in its intersection with other social identities such as race, ethnicity, status, class and age, in the armed take-over of Parliament and the hostage-taking crisis that followed.

THE MAY 2000 COUP AND HOSTAGE CRISIS

Gender Construction in the May 2000 coup and Hostage taking

Parliament symbolizes the highest democratic institution of the land, through which power or mandate is vested in elected representatives to govern and make decisions in Parliament on behalf of the people who elected them. Members therefore derive their mandate to rule from the 'ballot box,' as Article 21 (3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, "the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government [which] shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections."¹²³⁹

'Political' Masculinity versus 'Militarized' Masculinity

Exactly a year after the People's coalition government took office, and in an alarming scenario that re-enacted events of an earlier coup, a third coup was executed in Parliament on the morning of May 19, 2000. The 'take-over' was possible through the presence of guns in the hands of the men who are legally entitled to hold them as members of the military, but not for the purpose they were executing at that instant. For these young men, holding a gun is a means of

¹²³⁷ Lal, p. 182

¹²³⁸ Ibid, p. 175

¹²³⁹ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 21 (3), in <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

expressing their “masculinity” in an unequal situation where once again, “arms do the deciding.”¹²⁴⁰

Members of Parliament and members of Cabinet including the Prime Minister and his Ministers, both men and women, occupy the highest status in the political hierarchy, but on this day in Parliament, they were treated like ‘criminals’ and reduced to ‘nobodies’ by the armed men who had taken them hostage.

The Fiji Times on May 20th 2000, describes the take-over under the headline, ‘Coalition Government held hostage: ‘TAKEOVER AT GUNPOINT:’¹²⁴¹

We have again witnessed how one moment of madness will set this country back by decades. This illegal takeover must end. The democratically-elected People’s coalition has to be restored.¹²⁴²

A second article detailed the account of the ‘take-over’ under the sub-title: “Gunshots, handcuffs shock parliamentarians:”

A shout and the sound of running into the parliament stopped Deputy Prime Minister Dr Tupeni Baba in his tracks. He was ordered to sit down as stunned members on both sides of the House, watched all doors to the chambers shut by men holding guns. ... It was almost 11 am. ...Of the nine gunmen in the parliamentary chambers, only two had balaclavas on. The rest were in jeans and wearing caps, some brandishing pistols, others M-16 guns.

Mr Chaudhry was handcuffed first and roughly taken away from his seat and made to kneel in front of everybody... Dr Baba initially refused to obey the armed men’s orders to get up. He remained sitting, smiling at the intruders. He was then forcefully dragged out of his chair, handcuffed and made to kneel beside Mr Chaudhry. Another shot rang outside Parliament House. Attorney General Anand Singh was next. Then.... [six other Ministers]. Speight instructed his men that the women were to be spared the handcuffs. ...The

¹²⁴⁰ First, 1970: ix

¹²⁴¹ Fiji Times, May 20, 2000; p.1

¹²⁴² Fiji Times, 20/5/2000; p.1

armed men singled out the Fijian members of Cabinet, trying to force them to remain kneeling....”¹²⁴³

The armed men were led by George Speight, described by the media as a “failed businessman and declared bankrupt.”¹²⁴⁴ The men he led were members of the First Meridian Squadron (FMS), also known as the ‘Counter-Revolutionary Warfare’ (CRW) unit that Rabuka had set up in the military as a “coup-proofing mechanism” to counter acts of terrorism or insurgency following his 1987 coup.¹²⁴⁵ It is ironical that their role was contrary to the very act they were now engaged in. In a coup “that drew heavily for inspiration” from Rabuka’s 1987 coup,¹²⁴⁶ Speight and his group, who derived their power from the guns in their hands, declared a ‘civilian coup’ in the name of the indigenous people of Fiji.¹²⁴⁷ In the intersection between militarism and gender, Capie (2011) suggests that the most prominent symbols of militarism and masculinity are arguably the guns,¹²⁴⁸ which are used to reinforce the men’s masculinity and for which they are expected to be warriors and/or protectors.¹²⁴⁹

Despite the men’s training as part of the CRW squad and the military at large, I argue that the CRW unit had remained “irrelevant” as long as their combat skills and weapons remained under-utilized. Speight’s ‘personal motivation’ for the coup therefore “fed” on their ego as it presented an opportunity for them to prove their “manhood,” or masculinity by projecting themselves as brave and strong men.¹²⁵⁰ This mission was the closest they could get to “combat” to be able to play their role as fighters.¹²⁵¹

Capie (2011) notes in his research on ‘gender and guns’ in Papua New Guinea (2011) that,

“...there is growing evidence that access to weapons... is having [an] important impact in reconstructing identities and changing ...notions of masculinity, authority and leadership. ...As well as being tools for violence, guns are symbols of power and virility. Modern firearms are typically best employed by

¹²⁴³ Fiji Times, Saturday May 20 2000, p. 3

¹²⁴⁴ Ibid, ‘Speight “a bankrupt”, p. 5

¹²⁴⁵ Robertson R. and Sutherland, W.2001. Government by the Gun. Annadale: Pluto Press; p. 2

¹²⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 1

¹²⁴⁷ Emde, Sina. 2005. Feared Rumours and Rumours of Fear: The politicisation of Ethnicity during the Fiji coup in May 2000. *Oceania*, 75 (4), p. 387

¹²⁴⁸ Capie, David. 2011. Small arms, violence and gender in Papua New Guinea: Towards a research agenda. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, Vol. 52 (1) : p. 42

¹²⁴⁹ ibid

¹²⁵⁰ Olivera, Simic. 2006. Where are the Men? What about Women? *Journal for Political Theory and Research on Globalization, development and gender issues*, 16/01/2006, p. 2

¹²⁵¹ Olivera, p.2

young [men] who have the skills to rapidly take up and use new technology as well as the physical strength and endurance required for battle.¹²⁵²

This observation could very well apply to the situation unfolding in Parliament at that moment. The fact that these young men were not in military uniform but wearing civilian jeans, sunglasses, caps, and designer brand canvas shoes, indicates the notion of a 'modern' warrior masculinity,¹²⁵³ which we shall examine later in this chapter.

'Othering' in Militarism

To understand the re-envisioning of masculinities during a period of conflict, Ashe (2004) reiterates the necessity of examining men's identities and the gendered relationships during the conflict.¹²⁵⁴ Marshall (2004) also reminds us that militarism is an ideology that is structured around creating enemies and pursuing those images of "others" as a threat to one's own security.¹²⁵⁵ "Othering" is the lifeblood of militarism, which creates distinctions or differences no matter how false, between people, religion, race or ethnicity, etc.¹²⁵⁶ The 'other' is defined as "less than."¹²⁵⁷ The 1987 and 2000 coups were perpetrated in the name of indigenous peoples, by "othering" Indo-Fijians. Many examples of 'othering' were visible in the hostage-taking that morning in Parliament, such as 'Fijian' versus 'Indo-Fijian' (race, ethnicity), men versus women, masculinity versus femininity (gender), armed versus unarmed, young versus old (age), Minister/MP, chief versus commoner), (status and class), politician versus soldier (role), Christian vs Hindu or Muslim (religion) and the different Christian sects (Catholic, Methodist, SDA, etc.). These manifestations of 'othering' are analysed in the following section under the various forms in which gender is constructed as it intersects with other equally reinforcing social identities such as race, ethnicity, class, status, age, religion and others.

¹²⁵² Capie: p.49

¹²⁵³ Myrntinen, p. 42

¹²⁵⁴ Ashe, F. 2012: p. 197

¹²⁵⁵ Marshall, Lucinda. 2004. The connection between Militarism and Violence against Women, cited in Olivera, 2006; p.1.

¹²⁵⁶ *ibid*

¹²⁵⁷ Olivera, S. 2006. Where are the Men? What about Women? *Journal of Political Theory and Research on Globalization, development, and gender issues*. 16 Jan 2006, p.1

Femininity and women's gender roles

This section investigates how femininity or women's gender roles were constructed and reinforced during the hostage crisis. Five women Parliamentarians, all indigenous Fijians were among the 50 MPs taken hostage on May 19, 2000 and detained inside Parliament for periods ranging from 12 days when the first female hostage was released, to 37 days for the remaining four women and the 56 days for the rest of the male MPs of both races. Alexander argues that European colonial policies in Fiji served more often to strengthen existing patriarchal control of women, where they had a lower status than men, while high ranking women had a more privileged role than those of lower ranks.¹²⁵⁸ This dynamic was evident in Parliament on the first day of the 'hostage-taking' coup.

At around lunch time three women MPs were approached and requested by a civilian Fijian man (who had joined the rebel soldiers in Parliament), to get lunch for the hostages from the Parliament kitchen.¹²⁵⁹ One refused, but two agreed only so they could get out to see what was happening outside.¹²⁶⁰ The rebels ignored the political status of the women as Ministers or politicians (at least up to that point), or even as hostages whose freedom of movement was limited. They reinforced the women's domestic roles by approaching the women hostages to get food for their colleagues, although they did not approach another female hostage due to her chiefly status.¹²⁶¹

Ashe (2012) observes that during conflicts, ethno-nationalist discourses "tend to frame women's roles as maternal and domestic."¹²⁶² A female hostage shared that as the hostage crisis unfolded, the women felt that the easiest way they could get through to their gun-toting captors was by invoking their role as mothers (gender) and using their cultural "vanua" links (ethnicity):

We knew we had to approach the soldiers guarding us not only in our role as mothers, but also through our 'veiwekani vakavanua' (traditional links) such as 'tauvu' (shared spirit god) or 'kaivata' (same province). Once we established that relationship, I asked one of them,

¹²⁵⁸ Alexander,

¹²⁵⁹ Personal conversation and affirmation by two female hostages. To protect their identities demographic and intersectional details are left out, except where their identity is revealed in a public source.

¹²⁶⁰ *ibid*

¹²⁶¹ *ibid*

¹²⁶² Ashe, 2012: p.127; see also Yuval-Davis and Anthias, 1989;

MP: “Noqu tagane, iko kila ni cala vakalawa na ka dou cakava tu qo? Dou kila tiko na kenai tinitini?” (Son, do you realize that what you are doing is against the law? Do you know how this situation will end?). He replied,

Rebel soldier: “Io Nau. Keitou muria ga na ota.” (“Yes Nau” (respectful reference for Mother). “We are only obeying orders”).

We tried to engage them in conversation to get more information about what’s happening, who’s involved, and when will this thing end.¹²⁶³

Not knowing how long the crisis would last, the women felt it was important to establish good relations with their captors, by sharing their food and treating them just like their sons. They gave the rebels nicknames, one of whom they called “Bulldog,” who always carried a knapsack rumoured to contain grenades and explosives and appeared to look intimidating and fearsome (*viavia vakarerevaki*) at the beginning. The women would also joke quietly among themselves what they would do with the guns if they had a chance to grab them, as “Xena Warrior Princess” would have done.¹²⁶⁴ This was in reference to a popular American children’s TV series set in New Zealand and aired in Fiji from the mid-1990s, where Xena the strong female protagonist, uses her formidable fighting skills to rescue and help those unable to defend themselves.¹²⁶⁵ The female hostages had used their ‘imagination’ as a site of resistance to the surreal situation they were in. By appealing to both their gender and ethnicity, the female hostages had tried to normalize an abnormal situation by invoking their moral authority as mothers (gender role), and appealing at the same time to traditional links (ethnicity, cultural) to negotiate and establish amicable relations with the soldiers guarding them.

Olivera (2006) observes that in a conflict situation, the concept of ‘protection’ is crucial to the legitimacy of force and violence.¹²⁶⁶ This notion was reinforced when the women hostages were spared from being tied up like their male colleagues. A female hostage recounted, “I saw two CRW boys come for [Minister for Women], then I heard Speight say, “No, don’t touch the women.” I thought at least this guy still had some decency.¹²⁶⁷

¹²⁶³ Female hostage

¹²⁶⁴ Personal conversation with female hostages;

¹²⁶⁵ See for example, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xena:_Warrior_Princess

¹²⁶⁶ Olivera, 2007: p. 1

¹²⁶⁷ Female hostage;

By sparing the women from being tied up, Speight portrayed himself as a “protector” of the women, who are perceived as ‘vulnerable’ and in need of protection under the current situation.¹²⁶⁸ It is likely that he also saw his own ‘mother’ in these women, hence the urge to protect them. As the crisis protracted, the women were informed by the rebel soldiers that they were there to ‘protect’ them (hostages) from the crowd that had gathered at the Parliamentary complex.¹²⁶⁹ The women hostages felt however that the only people they needed “protection” from, were those who were holding them hostage.¹²⁷⁰

On the first evening of the coup, a rebel FAP MP who had joined Speight’s group asked the women hostages to sign a letter offering to resign their position as MP in exchange for their release.¹²⁷¹ One of the hostages recounted,

I was angry and said, “you think we would give up our seats easily knowing how difficult it was to even get in?” He must have thought we would grab any chance to use our gender for special treatment, just because we are women. History would judge us harshly for that, and we also had to think of the women who will come after us. It wasn’t only about ourselves at that point, it was also about our struggle as women to even put a foot through the door of this Parliament. We told him that if and when we got out, it would be the same way as the men.¹²⁷²

Certainly, the female hostages neither expected nor wished to be treated any different from the men as hostages, as they had received no special treatment to get into Parliament. The rebel male MP also expressed concerns for their safety:

He (rebel MP) then suggested that we move to another building in the complex where we would be “safer,” but we disagreed as we can never tell what these rebels can do to us, or to the men if we left. We felt it was safer to monitor what was happening from the big space of the Parliament chamber which we were already partitioning into safe spaces.¹²⁷³

¹²⁶⁸ Olivera, 2006: p.2

¹²⁶⁹ Female hostage

¹²⁷⁰ *ibid*

¹²⁷¹ Female hostage

¹²⁷² Female hostage

¹²⁷³ Female hostage; see also Gopal, A. 2015: ‘Coup hostage relives traumatic experience,’ in Fiji Times online, 04/08/2015, <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=316435>

The women hostages opted to remain where they were so they could also provide a buffer between their guards and the male hostages.

When a female hostage was released twelve days after the take-over due to the death of her sibling, the soldiers who came to pick her arrived after ten at night, but the rest of the female hostages insisted that the soldiers returned at daylight as they were concerned about her safety since she was going alone.¹²⁷⁴ After thirty-seven days in captivity, the remaining female hostages were finally released “in the middle of the night...like women eloping at night.”¹²⁷⁵ While the female hostages were warmly received at home upon their release, for one of them arriving home was a more traumatic experience compared to what she had just gone through as a hostage. She was blamed for what happened and threatened with physical violence for disobeying her husband who had forbidden her to enter politics.¹²⁷⁶

This incident underlines the critical issue of ‘male control and violence against women’ which oppress many Fijian women in Fiji. In a survey carried out the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre (FWCC) to assess the impact of the 2000 coup on women in Fiji, it was found that disobedience was used as a justification for violence against women, which demonstrates the “ingrained notion that women are meant to obey men.”¹²⁷⁷ A similar survey by the Centre (2013) on ‘Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) following the 2006 coup, reveals that 60 per cent of women (2 out of 3 women) who participated in the survey had been subjected to at least one form of controlling behavior by their husband or partner. The fact that ethnic Fijian males dominate in militarised violence through the coups, correlates with the higher percentage of ethnic Fijian women who experienced harsh forms of controlling behavior from their husbands or partners, compared to Indo-Fijian women.¹²⁷⁸ In a research by Anwary (2015) on violence against wives in Bangladesh, the links between expressions of masculinity and aggression bears similarities for Fiji, where men are perceived to be powerful and in control when their wives are obedient, thus upholding and reproducing

¹²⁷⁴ Personal account of female hostage;

¹²⁷⁵ See, Gopal, A. Fiji Times online, 04/08/2015; in <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=316435>

¹²⁷⁶ Female hostage

¹²⁷⁷ Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre. 2001. The Impact of the May 19 Coup on Women in Fiji. A Research project of the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre. Suva: Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre; as cited in Halapua, 2003: p. 112

¹²⁷⁸ Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre (FWCC). 2013. National Research on Women’s Health and Life Experiences in Fiji (2010/2011): A survey exploring the prevalence, incidence and attitudes to Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in Fiji. Suva: FWCC, p. 51;

hegemonic norms of hyper-masculine identities.¹²⁷⁹ Such controlling behavior also reflects a man's perception that by virtue of being the husband, not only does he have the right to punish his wife whenever she disobeys him, but that her disobedience is a sign of belittling or disrespecting his manhood or masculinity. Halapua (2003) translates this personal masculine identity to institutional level by arguing that militarism strengthens this ideology through military violence against 'others,' perpetrated invariably by Fijian male soldiers, and accepted as a legitimate exercise of power against those who demonstrate some forms of disobedience to military authoritarianism.¹²⁸⁰

It is a sad reality that many women in Fiji are prevented from realizing their full potential, such as participating in political life and national leadership due to the violent and controlling behaviour of their husbands or partners. This is a cost that a nation can ill afford, particularly a developing country like Fiji where women comprise half of the population and the country needs to utilize all of its human resources.¹²⁸¹ The parallels between the costs of violence against women in all its forms at the domestic level, and the costs of violence perpetrated against the nation and citizens of Fiji at national level through the coups and militarism must be understood and addressed, if Fiji as a nation and women in particular, are to reach their maximum potential.

Age and Masculinity in Hostage Crisis

As the armed take-over of Parliament unfolded before their eyes, some members of parliament thought they were watching a fire drill, or a cartoon display or guys playing cowboys with guns,¹²⁸² especially as the sound of running feet, loud shouts and men in jeans, sunglasses, caps and carrying pistols, dashed into the Chamber. The politicians, mostly older Indo-Fijian and Fijian men in formal suits, sat stunned and shocked on the seats of Parliament.¹²⁸³ Myrtilinen's (2003) observation becomes relevant at this stage that, '[N]otions of 'warrior' masculinity quite often take their fashion cues from western mass culture by wearing military style designer clothes, carrying a small gun in James Bond-

¹²⁷⁹ Anwary, 2015: pp 37-38

¹²⁸⁰ Halapua, 2003: p. 112

¹²⁸¹ UN Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. 1992. Women in Politics and Decision-Making in the late 20th century. Dordrecht, Boston, London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers: XIII;

¹²⁸² *Talanoa* session with, and personal account of three female hostages, citing the various thinking going in the minds of MPs in Parliament; see also, Orsman, Bernard. 2000. 'My 36 days of hell with George Speight's rebels:' an Interview with one female hostage, NZ Herald, 30 June 2000, in http://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/news/article.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=141570

¹²⁸³ Personal account by female hostages

style action hero or Rambo-style hyper-masculine hero with ludicrous weapons and muscles.¹²⁸⁴ The militarized imagery and the use of weapons as accessories, are manifestations of the notion of militarized masculinity.¹²⁸⁵ As for the men in suits, Ashe notes that “formal politics,” like the “call to arms” is very much a “call to manhood, where men are positioned as defenders of the political interests in the form of elected representatives.”¹²⁸⁶ The two types of masculinities facing each other on the floor of Parliament that morning, one armed and militarized, displaying a ‘warrior masculinity’ and prepared to engage in violence to restore by force through the “bullet box,” the political rights of their ethnic group, while the other group of ‘politicized’ masculinities, having obtained their mandate at the ‘ballot box,’ were ready to defend and represent the political interests of those they represented.¹²⁸⁷

The impression of the female members of Parliament watching the group of young, armed Fijian men, was their utter lack of respect for the august house and the members.¹²⁸⁸ These young men belonged to what Lal (2012) calls the ‘Children of 1987’ or as this thesis prefers, “the 1987 generation.”¹²⁸⁹ They had grown up having witnessed the success of Rabuka’s coups in 1987 and would have hero-worshipped him or even motivated to join the army because of him. To be drafted into this special squadron (CRW) that Rabuka himself had set up was a privilege for them. The 1987 generation “had a narrow, limited experience of multiculturalism, and little taste or patience for it” in contrast to the “post-independence generation of the 1970s, who grew up ...in a multi-cultural environment, dedicated to professionalism and the principles of good governance.”¹²⁹⁰ The “1987 generation” did not understand nor approved of the spirit of the 1997 constitution,¹²⁹¹ since at that moment they had taken hostage the Indo-Fijian Prime Minister and members of his government who had the mandate to govern according to that constitution.

A female hostage expressed shock and horror as she watched the bold aggression of this group that had taken over Parliament:

¹²⁸⁴ Myrntinen, H. 2003. Disarming Masculinities, in Disarmament Forum 4, UNIDIR; p. 42

¹²⁸⁵ Myrntinen, 2003: p. 42

¹²⁸⁶ Ashe, 2012: p.199

¹²⁸⁷ *ibid*

¹²⁸⁸ Personal account of female hostage

¹²⁸⁹ Lal, 2012: p.182

¹²⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 2012: p.182

¹²⁹¹ *Ibid*, 2012: p.182

They forced the Prime Minister to stand up and tied his hands behind his back, then made him kneel in front facing everybody, and did the same to the other Ministers... I couldn't stop my tears... tears of shame and pity...at how low our young men in the army have sunk, to carry out this coup. This is the Prime Minister of Fiji... and Ministers...who could have been their father... being forced to kneel down. You don't do that to your elders or those in high positions in our Fijian custom. And they said the coup was for indigenous people and their rights. ¹²⁹²

Alexander's (2009) reference to the action of young men in Bougainville during the 'crisis,' parallels that of the Fijian men that had now taken over Parliament when she writes,

[M]ilitarisation and the presence of weapons brought rampant ...violence to Bougainville...Rather than being in the hands of chiefs, power was in the hands of young men because they had guns. ¹²⁹³

The young men who grew up with the impact of the ten-year civil war and militarism in Bougainville had tasted a new source of power through access to weapons.¹²⁹⁴ Similarly, the young Fijian men, as members of the special CRW unit, had become emboldened by the success of the 1987 coups, and through the power of their guns brought the government to its knees in Parliament that day. These young men could no longer distinguish between asserting 'indigenous rights' to justify their takeover or putting into practice the age-old indigenous (or indeed universal) values of '*vakarokoro*' (respect) for elders and those in positions of leadership, let alone the rule of law. Teaiwa (2000) drives home this point when she states, that "the two military coups of 1987 and the current hostage crisis illustrate with disturbing insistence the erosion of indigenous Fijian social order and the fragmentation of indigenous Fijian leadership."¹²⁹⁵ It affirms a key argument of this thesis, that instead of becoming a means of asserting indigenous rights, the coups of 1987 and 2000, have actually become symptoms of the breakdown of indigenous values and social order.

¹²⁹² Fijian female hostage; see also Avinesh Gopal. 2015. Coup hostage relives traumatic experience, Fiji Times, Aug 04, 2015; Aug 11, 2015. The trauma of being a hostage.

¹²⁹³ Alexander, Ronnie. 2009. Costly Development? Gendered Insecurity in a Militarized Pacific, in Leckie, J. (ed.) Development in an Insecure World: the relevance of Millennium Goals. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd; p. 113

¹²⁹⁴ Alexander, 2009: p.113

¹²⁹⁵ Teaiwa, Teresia. 2000. An analysis of the current political crisis in Fiji, in TeKarere Ipurangi, Maori News Online, p.1

As Halapua (2003) observes,

“...a consequence of the coups has been the degeneration of the institutions of virtue within the indigenous Fijian society. The vanua (society) itself has been transformed significantly. The moral crisis gripping Fiji is an expression, a manifestation, of such a transformation and degeneration.”¹²⁹⁶

The ‘1987 generation’ had little patience¹²⁹⁷ with effecting change through slow-moving lawful processes and preferred to exploit their monopoly over arms to bring about instant change. As a newspaper article states, “[T]he coups of 1987 and 2000 indicate that if you can’t get what you want lawfully, then take it any way you can!”¹²⁹⁸ The guns have emboldened Fijian men to seize power from unarmed politicians by force.

It would therefore be in the interest of any elected government not connected to the military, to invest fully in civil-military relations and to incorporate the critical topic of the ‘role of the military in a democratic society’ through civilian supremacy, into the FMF training curriculum.

Gender and Ethnicity in the Hostage crisis

The construction of intersectionality means that we cannot talk about gender without considering other mutually constructing features of social organization and identities that shape people’s experiences of militarism and the coups.¹²⁹⁹ For Fiji, the most pervasive feature of social identity is race.

This section investigates how ‘race and ethnicity’ intersect with gender in the power dynamics between the coup-makers/hostage-takers, their supporters and the hostages in the May 2000 coup, by applying the concepts of ‘warrior’ (*bati*) masculinity and the ‘*taukei-vulagi*’ (native-foreigner) dichotomy.

During the Parliamentary take-over, the “othering” of Indo-Fijians occurred when the hostages were separated by race/ethnicity to determine who should be released. Similar to the first coup of 1987, members of the ‘Opposition’ were ordered to leave the chamber, on the assumption that all members of the Opposition were opposed to the “Indian” government of Prime Minister Chaudhry despite the fact that some opposition members

¹²⁹⁶ Halapua, 2000: p. 123

¹²⁹⁷ Lal, 2012: p. 182

¹²⁹⁸ Fiji Sunday Post, July 30, 2000: p. 2 cited in Halapua, 2003: p. 123

¹²⁹⁹ Shields, S. 2008. Gender an Intersectionality Perspective. *Sex Roles*, 59: p.

like the part-Europeans (two opposition members including a woman, were of mixed race), did not identify as indigenous Fijian. On the other hand, indigenous Fijian members on the government side were taken hostage along with their Indo-Fijian colleagues in the 'Indian'-led Labour coalition government, despite the coups being justified on the rights of indigenous people. The hostages were further marginalized when Indo-Fijians were separated and moved to another room away from their ethnic Fijian colleagues. An attempt by their captors to isolate the Fijian female hostages was met with resistance by the women who were satisfied with the space and security arrangements in the Parliamentary chamber that was to be their home for 12 to 37 days, and 56 days for their male colleagues.¹³⁰⁰

The 'warrior masculinity' (bati ideology)

To understand what had motivated these soldiers to display such blatant disrespect and arrogance against the Prime Minister, his Ministers and members of his government, most of whom were indigenous Fijians, I refer to the notion of 'warrior masculinity'¹³⁰¹ and the gendered power dynamics between the perpetrators of the coup and the hostages of the May 2000 crisis.

The *bati* ideology as discussed earlier in Chapter 4, refers to the relationship between the *turaga* (chief) and his *bati* (warriors). In pre-cession era, a chief was able to consolidate his power and authority through the exploits of his *bati* (warrior). The chiefs that led Fiji at independence enjoyed a patronage relationship with the Fiji military, as senior military officers belonged to the same chiefly families.¹³⁰² The coups have become a typical modern-day warfare, by attempting to displace a non-chief (who does not belong to the eastern dynastic class), as head of government, since as Lawson (2004) argues, civilian leaders are regarded as legitimate only as long as they are part of the same social network of aristocratic families that provides military leaders.¹³⁰³ This explains why Dr Bavadra (1987) and now Chaudhry (and later Qarase) had fallen victim to the *bati* ideology or the 'warrior' masculinity that overthrew them, as an excuse to restore power and status to traditional chiefs.¹³⁰⁴

¹³⁰⁰ Female hostages, personal conversation;

¹³⁰¹ Tuitoga, Anare.2004. How Modern was Speight's coup? *Fijian Studies*, Vol 2 (2); pp. 202-205;

¹³⁰² Sanday, 1989.

¹³⁰³ Lawson, S.2004. Regime change as regime maintenance in Fiji. *Research School of Pacific Studies*, ANU: Canberra; p.2

¹³⁰⁴ Tuitoga, 2004: p. 205

One of the hostages had noted during the take-over that “Speight had several phones and there was a lot of calling going around... He appeared to have been waiting for someone.”¹³⁰⁵ Robertson et.al (2001) suggest that, “...the [CRW] Unit [waited] for their military and Fijian leaders to again rally to the Fijian cause. Beyond all expectation the Fijian establishment refuse.”¹³⁰⁶ While the coup appeared to have been poorly planned,¹³⁰⁷ Speight and his group exhibited a ‘warrior identity’¹³⁰⁸ when they carried out the initial raid and then waited for the chiefs to come and claim the ‘spoils’ of the coup. When the chiefs failed to appear, Speight and his group reluctantly transformed the take-over into a protracted hostage crisis with the additional goal of removing Fijian leaders who were perceived to have ‘sold out’ indigenous rights so readily, resulting in political leadership being wrested from the hands of Fijians.¹³⁰⁹

While the police and the military hesitated, paralyzed and confused over how to respond to the security crisis inside the gates of Parliament,¹³¹⁰ busloads of people from Naitasiri and Wainibuka including Naloto, arrived at the Parliamentary complex to provide human shields in support of Speight and the Fijian ‘cause,’ should the army decide to attack.¹³¹¹ Tuitoga (2004) describes the people of Naloto as “very militant and display aggression often associated with military life.”¹³¹² This is because they are the traditional *bati* (warriors) for the Vunivalu (warlord) of Bau, a traditional title held by the Cakobau family of Bau, as direct descendants of Ratu Cakobau, who led the chiefs in the cession of Fiji to Great Britain in 1874.¹³¹³ The Naloto men therefore believe that the Vunivalu is the paramount chief of Fiji and by implication the king of Fiji. As traditional warriors of the *Tui Viti* (King of Fiji), it was their traditional duty to fight on behalf of the rest of the indigenous people.¹³¹⁴

Tuitoga noted how strongly the Naloto men felt about Speight being their relative, and so as warriors of the Vunivalu, they could not stand by and watch him execute the coup on

¹³⁰⁵ Avinesh Gopal, Fiji Times, August 04, 2015. Coup hostage relives traumatic experience, in <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=316435>

¹³⁰⁶ Robertson, et.al. 2001, Back cover

¹³⁰⁷ Robertson et.al. p. 2

¹³⁰⁸ Ashe, Fidelma. 2012. Re-envisioning Masculinities in the context of conflict transformation: the gender politics of demilitarizing Northern Island society, in Kronsell, A. and E. Svedberg (eds). Making Gender, Making War. London: Routledge. Ch. 14; p.197

¹³⁰⁹ Robertson et.al., p.2

¹³¹⁰ Lal, p.177

¹³¹¹ Tuitoga, p. 202; see also Robertson and Sutherland, 2001: p. 4;

¹³¹² Tuitoga, p. 202

¹³¹³ *ibid*, p. 203

¹³¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 205

behalf of indigenous Fijians without lending support.¹³¹⁵ Participating in the coup gave them a sense of accomplishment since they were fulfilling their role as the Vunivalu's warriors by demonstrating their loyalty to the late Vunivalu's daughters, Adi Samanunu and Adi Litia Cakobau whenever they visited Parliament.¹³¹⁶ Speight had even proposed Adi Samanunu's name as interim Prime Minister in the post-2000 coup regime.¹³¹⁷ The men of Naloto were willing to sacrifice their lives for the 'cause', which was to "return the governing of Fiji to the indigenous people who would be sympathetic to the plight of Fijians."¹³¹⁸

The Naloto men demonstrated a 'warrior masculinity' in justifying their support for Speight. The coup and the ensuing hostage crisis was an opportunity to display their "manhood"¹³¹⁹ and "*ferocious fighting spirit.*"¹³²⁰ Naloto men who did not join them in Parliament were scornfully referred to as the "women who stayed at home."¹³²¹ For the Naloto men, the coup and the hostage crisis was a modern 'warfare' where they could 'pretend' to fight off the 'enemy,' in this case Prime Minister Chaudhry and members of his coalition government as the 'other,' in order to restore power to the indigenous people and their chiefs. They felt cheated by the western-liberal form of democracy and a constitution that allowed an Indo-Fijian to become the Prime Minister of Fiji.¹³²² Speight was able to manipulate the fears and insecurities of these men by invoking a 'warrior masculinity' to restore power and control to the indigenous peoples.

Two critical questions arise with regards to the coup and the hostage crisis: 'Why does 'race' matter in the leadership of the nation? To what extent was the 2000 coup a manifestation of the internal friction among indigenous Fijians themselves? These questions shall be analysed in the following section.

¹³¹⁵ Tuitoga, p. 203

¹³¹⁶ Tuitoga, p. 203

¹³¹⁷ Lal, 2012: p. 178

¹³¹⁸ Tuitoga, p. 194

¹³¹⁹ *ibid*, p. 203

¹³²⁰ *ibid*, p. 204

¹³²¹ *ibid*, p. 203

¹³²² *ibid*, p. 199; see also Rakuita, 2002: p. 101

CONSTRUCTION OF INDIGENOUS FIJIAN 'RACIAL IDENTITY'

Addressing racial discourse on the coups in the socio-political context of Fiji is a challenge, because of the complexity of the issues involved. The 1987 coups overthrew an ethnic Fijian prime minister and his 'Indian' dominated government, while in 2000, the 'Indo-Fijian' Prime Minister and his government comprising many indigenous Fijians, was ousted to reassert indigenous political rights. Ratuva (2007) contends that understanding ethno-political conflict in Fiji is not easy because of the complex ways in which tension manifests itself, thus his emphasis that "the coups were the work of Fijians," hence the need to address the Fijian dimension of the coups.¹³²³ This shall be examined in the following section under the *Taukei-Vulagi* ' ideology.

'*Taukei-Vulagi*' philosophy¹³²⁴

The first Fijian dimension of the coups that I shall examine is what Rakuita (2002) refers to as the '*taukei-vulagi*' (native-foreigner) philosophy.¹³²⁵ Under this ideology, the '*vanua*'¹³²⁶ is acknowledged as the most significant aspect of indigenous socio-political organization since pre-contact era. Rakuita argues that, "[O]ne can only be a '*taukei*' in a specifically designated '*vanua*' one identifies with and derives an eternal identity from. Elsewhere across Fiji, one takes on the identity of a '*vulagi*'¹³²⁷(foreigner, stranger, guest). This is affirmed by the ceremony of '*sevusevu*' which is a traditional presentation of 'kava' or 'yaqona' seeking approval to set foot on land where they are considered *vulagi*.¹³²⁸ Furthermore, every Fijian is registered in the '*Vola ni kawa bula*' (VKB) or Indigenous Fijian register, which records all members of the clans in the 14 provinces in Fiji,¹³²⁹ and

¹³²³ Ratuva, S. 2007. The paradox of multiculturalism: ethno-political conflict in Fiji, in Brown, M.A. Security and Development in the Pacific Islands: social resilience in emerging states. USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers Ltd, p.199

¹³²⁴ Rakuita, Tui. 2002. *Taukei-Vulagi* philosophy and the coup of 19 May 2000. Pacific Studies, Vol. 25 (4), pp 93-108;

¹³²⁵ *Taukei* denotes native of a place, in this case Fiji; or owner of something, such as land (*taukei ni qele*-landowner), *taukei ni vale*-home owner); while '*vulagi*' refers to a guest, stranger or visitor and denotes a temporary visit; see Gatty, R. 2009: p. 259

¹³²⁶ see Gatty, Ronald. 2009. Fijian-English Dictionary. Suva, Fiji: USP; p. 292; The term '*vanua*' refers here to territory, land and may range from the smallest landowning unit of *tokatoka* (extended families), which make up a *mataqali* (clan), with several clans forming a *yavusa* (tribe), and several *yavusa* extending to form a district, which make up a province, with many provinces forming a *matanitu* (confederacy) and ultimately, three major confederacies make up the *Matanitu Vanua* (Nation).

¹³²⁷ Rakuita, p. 95

¹³²⁸ Gatty, 2009: p.227

¹³²⁹ National Archives of Fiji online, Archives helps preserve the *Vola ni Kawa bula* (Indigenous record), in <http://archivesfiji.org/2016/06/archives-helps-preserve-vola-ni-kawa-bula-indigenous-records-2/>

establishes which *mataqali* (clan) one belongs to, the links to ownership of the land, qoliqoli (fishing grounds), lease money and other resources that the clan has access to.¹³³⁰ As a patrilineal society, Fijians are registered into their father's clan, which she or he is *tau* to, or a mother's clan if she is not married, or if the mother marries outside of her clan and seeks permission from the clan to have her child registered in her own *mataqali*. In the majority of cases, the heads of *mataqali* are men who are also the main decision-makers in the affairs of the *mataqali* or clan.

There is also a wide range of existing relationships that indigenous Fijians enjoy with other '*vanua*.' For example, one is *vasu* to one's mother's village and relatives, while other '*vanua*-centred' relations like '*tauvu*,' '*mataqali*,' '*naita*,' '*veitabani*,' '*kaivata*,' and '*tovata*' or '*yanu*' (same island), are cultural references that serve to strengthen bonds, kinship ties, traditional links and relations between and among members of different *vanua*.¹³³¹ Variations of these definitive relationships connecting a particular *vanua* to others, are found in all indigenous communities in Fiji.¹³³² Even in the urban areas, it is common to hear youths from the same neighbourhood refer to each other as '*yasayasa*' (same area) or '*yasa*' in short.

Rakuita notes that this *vanua*-centred conception of the '*tau*kei-*vulagi*' philosophy was transformed into a national identity following the emergence of a distinct nation-state during the colonial era.¹³³³ In this way, an identity that once held meaning only when attached to the *vanua*, became translated into a national identity through the term "kai Viti," (Fijian) which became,

the collective identity of people of otherwise different *vanua*, as colonialists attempted to form a nation-state by merging indigenous socioeconomic systems, that were demarcated and influenced by distinct geographical spaces.¹³³⁴

¹³³⁰ *ibid*

¹³³¹ see Gatty, 2009 (n104 above) for definition of '*vasu*' (p.293) refers to one's mother's village or relatives; '*mataqali*' (p.163) refers to a group of clans; '*veitabani*' (p.244) is a type of kinship relation for a whole community or region, based on two sets of *vanua* having ancestral spirits who were cross cousins, thus they call each other, '*Naita*.' The relationship allows disrespectful jokes, similar to a *tauvu* (p.261) where people of certain tribes from different *vanua* derive from the same ancestral spirit (*vu*). They address each other as "*tau*" while very close *tauvu* relations (*tauvu dredre*) they are inclined to play dirty jokes or tricks against each other, playful insults, to try and outdo the other.

¹³³² Rakuita, p.95

¹³³³ *ibid*

¹³³⁴ Rakuita, p. 96

This was part of dramatic changes that were instituted under the British colonial native policy, which also included an imposed system of 'divide and rule' under chiefly governance in which small Fijian chiefdoms and larger kingdoms came under centralized rule.¹³³⁵ Alexander (2006) elaborates on this conception thus:

In order to build what would eventually come to be known as "Fiji," the creation of a single 'Fijian' identity was necessary, and...the determination of what constitutes this 'indigenous Fijian identity' has proved to be a continuing issue. Determining 'Fijian-ness' involved gender, race/ethnicity and class.¹³³⁶

Ratuva adds that, "the Fijian administration consolidated a sense of homogeneity and collective identity among Fijians" which "created a collective sense of 'Fijian-ness' as opposed to the '*vulagi*' (foreigners)."¹³³⁷

When scrutinized under a gender lens, the '*taukei-vulagi*' ideology reduces indigenous women to a perpetual status of '*vulagi*' (stranger/guest) in their husband's *vanua*, which can be seen through the practice of two customary ceremonies performed on behalf of women. The presentation of "*a i tataunaki*," shortened as "*ai tatau*" (formal request for care) is the final customary presentation from the bride's male relatives to the husband and his relatives seeking their assurance that they would take care of their daughter or sister. Daurewa (2009) shares her personal experience of '*ai tatau*' as:

a customary practice that my family performed to secure a formal vow of care and protection for me, from my husband's family. Failure to honour the promise usually meant death for the husband and even his tribe in the olden days.¹³³⁸

The '*ai tatau*' custom is supposed to guarantee a woman's safety and security, yet this study is not aware of a Fijian woman invoking it, despite the high incidence of 'intimate partner violence' (IPV) experienced by Fijian women compared to their Indo-Fijian sisters.¹³³⁹ The second customary presentation is "*a i raici*" (formal request for her return) which is performed at the end of the traditional funeral rites for a woman's husband. Like

¹³³⁵ Ratuva, 2007: p. 204

¹³³⁶ Alexander, R. 2006. Political Violence in the South Pacific: Women after the coups in Fiji. *Journal of International Cooperation Studies*, Vol. 14 (1): p. 5

¹³³⁷ Ratuva, p. 204

¹³³⁸ Daurewa, A. 2009. The power of Fijian women. *Fiji Times*, May 2009; as cited in *Pacific Islands Report*, 5/01/2009: <http://www.pireport.org/articles/2009/05/01/power-fiji-s-women>

¹³³⁹ FWCC, 2013: p.51

the *ai tatau*, a *tabua* (whale's tooth) is presented to the male relatives of the deceased by the widow's male relatives, seeking her return to her *vanua*. The implication is that the woman remains a *vulagi* in her husband's *vanua*, until she returns to her own people if she outlives him. Her *vulagi* status is affirmed by the fact that she is not registered into her husband's 'Vola ni Kawa bula' (VKB) or the Indigenous Fijian register upon marriage, unlike her children, as she remains registered in her father's clan. Even if the couple lived in the urban area, it is still proper to traditionally seek her return to her *vanua* on the death of her husband.¹³⁴⁰ It must be emphasized that cultural and traditional practices and ceremonies vary according to the different *vanua* in Fiji.

Fijian claim to indigeneity or origin

A second dimension of the '*tauvei-vulagi*' ideology is based on Fijian claims to cultural identity as natives, original or first settlers of the Fiji group,¹³⁴¹ which Fijians claim through various mythologies, appeals to tradition, and certain forms of deeply rooted cultural practices and ceremonies.¹³⁴² Following the 1987 and 2000 coups, there was an increasing appeal to Christianity to justify Fijian '*tauvei*'-ness and the coups as a means of restoring Fijian control.¹³⁴³ The claim to Christianity as a major component of Fijian identity¹³⁴⁴ is based on oral tradition mixed with Christian beliefs that indigenous Fijians are part of the lost tribe of Israel whose cultural evolution can be compared to the journey of the Israelites through the wilderness from Egypt to Canaan, the Promised Land.¹³⁴⁵ At key moments during my field research in Fiji, I was advised by staunch Christian women to read my Bible if I wanted to understand the Christian justification for Fijian claim to nativity. Two texts in particular were pointed out, one is the 'Song of Moses' in Deuteronomy 32: 7-8, which reads:

Think of the past, of the time long ago; ask your parents to tell you what happened, Ask the old people to tell of the past. The Most High assigned nations their lands; He determined where peoples should live.¹³⁴⁶

¹³⁴⁰ Based on personal observation and information sought from indigenous women during *talanoa* sessions at key social events such as funeral and wedding;

¹³⁴¹ Ratuva, p. 210

¹³⁴² Ratuva, p.210

¹³⁴³ Garret, 1990: p.88

¹³⁴⁴ Ratuva, p.120; it must be noted that the 'lotu' or Christian religion preceded the cession in 1874, since the missionaries first arrived in Fiji in the 1830s (see Chapter 4);

¹³⁴⁵ See Teaiwa, T. Articulated Cultures: Militarism and Masculinities in Fiji during the Mid-1990s. *Fijian Studies*, Vol. 3(2), p. 211

¹³⁴⁶ Good News Bible, Old Testament.: Deuteronomy 32:7-8; p. 203

The second is from Acts 17: 26-27:

From one man, he created all races of mankind and made them live throughout the whole earth. He himself fixed beforehand the exact times and the limits of the places where they would live.¹³⁴⁷

During 'talanoa' sessions, I was constantly reminded that the Christian God had pre-determined and fixed the boundaries where each race of people in the world should live, so he chose Fiji as the "one and only, God-given birth right for Fijians, just as India is the birth right of the Indian race."¹³⁴⁸

Based on this conception of *taukeism*, Tuitoga asserts that the men of Naloto, and others who supported Speight's coup, insisted that they do not want a *vulagi* to rule Fiji. Even though Indo-Fijians have lived in Fiji since 1879, they were still regarded as *vulagi* in the eyes of Fijians like the Naloto men,¹³⁴⁹ who were adamant that while Indo-Fijians can exercise certain privileges, these do not extend to running the government in which they are *vulagi*.¹³⁵⁰ This is why Speight's supporters like the Naloto men felt that the President Ratu Mara had "sold out" to Indo-Fijians by allowing Chaudhry to become Prime Minister,¹³⁵¹ even if it was within the law. The argument that there were more indigenous Fijians in Chaudhry's government was irrelevant to the Naloto people who expressed, "*era sa voli oti nai Taukei oqori*" (those Fijians have already been bought).¹³⁵² The appointment of Chaudhry as Prime Minister by President Ratu Mara, and his (Ratu Mara) declarations against the 2000 coup, were contrary to his initial response to the 1987 coups when he had accepted a role in Rabuka's Council of Ministers, thereby legitimising the coup that overthrew the Bavadra government, a decision that came back to haunt him in 2000.

Hence, in answer to the question, 'why race matters in the leadership of the nation,' and what had motivated the men who executed the coup to perpetrate such degrading acts of humiliation against Prime Minister Chaudhry and his Ministers the majority of whom were Fijian men, it was because, from their perspective on the limits of the *taukei-vulagi* philosophy, Chaudhry as a non-indigenous had crossed the line by taking up the position of

¹³⁴⁷ Good News Bible. New Testament: Acts 17:26-27; p. 174

¹³⁴⁸ Personal conversation with 2 Fijian women, one in her 60s and one in 70s, both Methodists, Dec 10th 2012;

¹³⁴⁹ Tuitoga, pp. 198-199

¹³⁵⁰ *ibid*, p. 199

¹³⁵¹ *ibid*, p. 200

¹³⁵² Tuitoga, p. 199

Prime Minister, while Fijian members of his government were accused of “*liu muri*” or “traitors” for supporting him.¹³⁵³ Misunderstanding this *vanua*-based conception of *taukei-ism* had incurred accusation of Fijians as ‘supremacists,’ ‘nationalists,’ ethno-nationalists, or ‘racists,’ particularly following the 1987 and 2000 coups.

Fijians who have settled in overseas countries with their own indigenous people such as New Zealand (Maori) or Australia (Aborigines), and who understand well the difference between citizenship rights and indigenous rights, tend to accept and apply this conception of *taukei-vulagi* in their new land. For example, an indigenous Fijian woman who attended high school and university in New Zealand and had settled there but maintained strong ties to her indigenous Fijian roots, states:

Here (in NZ) we know that the Maoris are ‘taukei,’ so we do not even try to take anything from them. We accept what the government provides us as citizens - equality of opportunities, equality before the law.¹³⁵⁴

For multiculturalism and multiracialism to work in Fiji, it is important that both indigenous and non-indigenous people understand and appreciate the difference in meaning and implications of ‘indigeneity’ or indigenous rights and ‘citizenship’ rights.

Internal dynastic clash

A third ‘Fijian’ dimension of the 2000 coup, is what Fraenkel (2000) and Ratuva (2009) refer to as “the clash of dynasties.”¹³⁵⁵ Fraenkel (2000) notes that as the hostage crisis dragged on, it quickly revealed other underlying tensions such as the “frictions among Fiji’s chiefly elite and a seething discontent among the peri-urban Fijian populace.”¹³⁵⁶ Lal views the coup as being against the Fijian establishment when he states,

It is almost a truism now to say this crisis, as it unfolded, became more about intra-Fijian rivalries than about race. Even George Speight himself admitted that the race issue between Fijians and Indians is just one piece of the jigsaw puzzle that has many pieces. But this crisis is a coup against the Fijian

¹³⁵³ Personal account of female hostage who shared that during the early days of the hostage crisis, people including women who were in Parliament complex would yell out in Fijian, “Liu Muri” which refers to someone who is a traitor or has betrayed someone, which later dawned on them was due to their association with PM Chaudhry and Labour government.

¹³⁵⁴ Professional Fijian woman educated in Fiji and NZ and now lives in New Zealand

¹³⁵⁵ Fraenkel, 2000: p. 300; Ratuva, 2009: p.199

¹³⁵⁶ Fraenkel, Jon. 2000. The Clash of Dynasties and Rise of Demagogues: Fiji’s *Tauri Vakaukauwa* of May 2000. The Journal of Pacific History, Vol. 35 (3) p. 295;

establishment and traditional power arrangements. Some have argued convincingly that [Speight] represents the interests of the Kubuna confederacy against the long ascendancy of the traditional hierarchies of the Koro Sea.¹³⁵⁷

As the hostage crisis dragged on and Speight's group rejected the proposed resolutions by the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC), it became obvious that the coup was a charade for a particular section of the indigenous community. Speight's group had demanded that the 1997 constitution be abrogated, not merely amended, an amnesty implying immunity from prosecution rather than a pardon after prosecution, and for President Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara to step down.¹³⁵⁸ Such open defiance of the chiefly establishment (since Ratu Mara was appointed as President by the GCC), was a telling sign that the chiefly class who had rallied behind the 1987 coups, was fast losing ground, despite the justification of the coup on Indigenous rights. The indigenous values of *veidokai* (respect), *veirokorokovi* (mutual respect), and *veivakaturagataki* (respect for chiefly authority), were discarded in the face of the coups.

Speight and his Fijian supporters were now openly defying Ratu Mara. As Robertson and Sutherland (2001) observe,

Fijians were now confronting Fijians. Their leaders were not acting as part of a united political force.... Some provincial chiefs saw the attempted coup as an opportunity to redress long-perceived inequalities within the Fijian community; others saw it as an opportunity to consolidate a new and more radicalized Fijian leadership.¹³⁵⁹

Similar sentiments were expressed by the Naloto people supporting Speight in Parliament as noted by Tuitoga:

...the people voiced great dissatisfaction at the way they have been treated in the past and continue to be treated today. It appears to them that a lot of the development has been concentrated in Eastern Fiji. They alluded to the former Alliance Party as a party stacked with Eastern chiefs who were strongly influenced by the Polynesians and adopted a hierarchical system. For Naloto

¹³⁵⁷ Lal, 178

¹³⁵⁸ Fraenkel, 2000: p. 297

¹³⁵⁹ Robertson, et.al., 2001: p. 4

and other 'colo' (interior or highland) part of Fiji where the people were more Melanesian in physique and led a more egalitarian lifestyle, the practice in the East was associated more with the foreigners from Polynesia.¹³⁶⁰

Lal contends that Speight's supporters saw Ratu Mara as part of the problem of a long dynastic reign in Fijian politics that had favoured the development of the Polynesian-influenced eastern group of Fiji, while starving the mainland (Viti Levu) *vanua* of their share of the benefits of development, national leadership and influence.¹³⁶¹

Despite attempts by the colonial government to subsume socio-political diversities (such as *vanua*, language, leadership, custom, etc.) into a common identity, the crisis exposed that Fijians are not, and never have been a homogeneous group. Teaiwa (2000) argues that the problem with Fijian nationalism is that there is no Fijian nation, instead there are provinces and traditional Fijian confederacies.¹³⁶² Both Rakuita (2002) and Lal (2012), point to the 2000 coup as a manifestation of the internal friction among indigenous Fijians themselves with Indo-Fijians being dragged in to act as a buffer.¹³⁶³

As the hostage crisis dragged on, it became obvious that the coup had manifested into a deep-seated feeling of resentment among indigenous Fijians such as those on mainland Viti Levu, including the men of Naloto and Kubuna, who felt left out of the benefits of development under the rule of the eastern dynastic chiefs.

The Indo-Fijian Identity

Ratuva (2009) identifies two competing discourses in the struggle for Indo-Fijian identity in Fiji.¹³⁶⁴ One is based on the view that "Indo-Fijian culture has rich primordial roots in the great Indus civilization," with associated romanticism of "motherland India" (Mother India) as the basis for cultural pride and technological superiority compared to the *jungali* (bushman) Fijian culture.¹³⁶⁵ While the "mythologization of the Indian motherland reinforces a sense of cultural continuity, genesis, and permanence," it also invokes ethnic

¹³⁶⁰ Tuitoga, 2004: pp.200-201;

¹³⁶¹ Lal, 2012: p. 176;

¹³⁶² Teaiwa, T. 2000. An analysis of the current political crisis in Fiji, in Te Karere Ipurangi, Maori News Online, available at: karere@maorinews.com; p.1

¹³⁶³ Rakuita, p. 101; see also Lal, 2012: p. 178

¹³⁶⁴ Ratuva, 2009: p. 211; also cited Nandan, S. 2001. Requiem for a rainbow, a Fijian Indian story. Canberra, ACT: Pacific Indian Publications;

¹³⁶⁵ *ibid*

stereotyping against (what they perceive to be) the 'inferior' Fijian culture."¹³⁶⁶ The second aspect of Indo-Fijian identity, is based on the assumption that India was the "grandmother" but that Fiji is now the "motherland."¹³⁶⁷ The Indo-Fijian culture has become an inseparable part of Fiji's history, and for many descendants of indentured labourers, it is Fiji not India that is their homeland, "the site for their claim to legitimacy."¹³⁶⁸ It is this claim to Fiji as the motherland that has created a situation of identity contestation between Indo-Fijians and ethnic Fijians, who feel their sense of *taukei-ness* in their God-given land under threat, which then translates to the "Indian" threat.

Lal captures well the predicament of the Indo-Fijian in Fiji when he states that,

[T]he Fijian, the 'taukei', the indigenous owner of the land, who has lived side by side with his/her Indo-Fijian neighbour, still regards him/her as a 'vulagi', a foreigner, welcome to stay and enjoy the hospitality of the host but knowing fully well whose house it is. Indo-Fijians, now fourth or fifth generation, are hurt to be still regarded as outsiders in the land of their birth, threatened with the denial of equal citizenship and equal protection of the law. Sometimes those who applaud the indigenous Fijians for maintaining their culture and tradition, ask the Indo-Fijian to subjugate theirs in the cause of assimilation¹³⁶⁹

Lal's poignant portrayal of the feelings of Indo-Fijians for being referred to as '*vulagi*' after over a century of settlement in Fiji their land of birth, is understandable. His reference to Rushdie's point that migrants do not remain visitors forever, and that their new land "owns" them in the end, is reasonable.¹³⁷⁰ Because under normal circumstances that would be the logical progression of migration from the old to a new country. Just as a migrant 'adopts' his or her new country, so too does the new country 'own' him or her.

This claim becomes problematic however, when juxtaposed alongside Rakuita's rationalization of the *taukei-vulagi* ideology. Rakuita points to the indigenous Fijian conception of national belonging or *taukei-ness* as being "*vanua-grounded*" or limited only to the *vanua* or land where he or she claims roots, while he or she is considered *vulagi* in

¹³⁶⁶ Ratuva, p. 211

¹³⁶⁷ Ratuva, p. 211

¹³⁶⁸ *ibid*

¹³⁶⁹ Lal, 2012: p. 179; see also Ravuvu. Asesela. 1991. *The Façade of democracy: Fijian struggle for political control, 1830-1987*. Reader Reading Service: Suva; cited in Lal, p. 179;

¹³⁷⁰ Lal, 2012: p. 180

other *vanua*.¹³⁷¹ When applied at the national level, Fijians still reduce their conception of national belonging or citizenship to one that is *vanua* or indigeneity-based, that is, to say that one is a “kai Viti” or Fijian, is to know one’s roots or origin, from ‘*tokatoka*’, ‘*mataqali*’, ‘*yavusa*’, ‘*koro*’, ‘*tikina*’, ‘*yasana*’, right up to ‘*matanitu*’¹³⁷² In my case for example, my claim to Fijian-ness is based on belonging to the land of my *tokatoka* Qaraisoki, *mataqali* Valelevu, *yavusa* Cakaudrove, *koro* (village) of Somosomo in Taveuni, in Cakaudrove province (*yasana*). I remain a ‘vulagi’ in other parts of my island and the rest of Fiji. This contradiction then becomes a source of contention between human rights activists against the *taukei* Fijians whom they accuse of ethno-nationalism and therefore racism, which arises more from a lack of understanding of the differences between the concepts of citizenship and indigeneity.

Ethno-nationalism and Multiculturalism: Equality vs Difference debate

The colonial native policy that had kept the two races apart at the social, economic, or political level, did not allow meaningful integration between them, resulting in separate economic activities and political representation.¹³⁷³ As a consequence, “Fijians came to distrust Indo-Fijians and Indo-Fijians developed an attitude of cultural superiority toward Fijians.”¹³⁷⁴ These mutual feelings of distrust and contempt are then translated into cultural identity and thence to political identity resulting in ethnic stereotyping and scapegoating.¹³⁷⁵ Lal rues for example that many Fijians regard Indo-Fijians as the cause of their difficulties, “noisy, insensitive, self-seeking, ungenerous, grubby, ungrateful, alien in their religion, social relationships and world view, altogether a most undesirable people.”¹³⁷⁶ Ratuva observes that Indo-Fijians perceive Fijians as “lazy, stupid *jungalis*”, while Fijians consider Indians as “cunning, selfish, untrustworthy, and conspiratorial.”¹³⁷⁷

We therefore see how certain mannerisms and cultural habits that are displayed by members of one ethnic group, become homogenised and generalised as a stereotype against the whole group.

¹³⁷¹ Rakuita, p. 95

¹³⁷² Tokatoka (sub-clan made up of extended families), mataqali (clan), yavusa (tribe), koro (village), tikina (district), matanitu (confederacy); Please note the glossary contains all Fijian words used and their English translation;

¹³⁷³ Ratuva, p.204

¹³⁷⁴ ibid

¹³⁷⁵ Ratuva, p. 212.

¹³⁷⁶ Lal, p. 179

¹³⁷⁷ Ratuva, p. 212

As Ratuva states:

These stereotypes do not only emerge in moments of anger and humour; they have over the years been used at the level of political and parliamentary discourse by politicians and leaders as a means of condemning the other group either explicitly or implicitly. Fijian nationalists used the stereotypes effectively in their mobilizing speeches during the coups as a way of fuelling anger against Indo-Fijians... The coups merely reinforce in the minds of Indo-Fijians the violent “barbarity” of the Fijian.”¹³⁷⁸

In a submission to the 1995 Constitution review commission following the 1987 coup, an Indo-Fijian doctor had stated:

The Indian grief is deep. He is considered foreign in the land that he chose to make his home. Though he lived in anxiety and fear he spared no effort to make this country what it is today. He is hated for this wealth...he is deliberately misunderstood when he means no harm. He is blamed for being selfish when he is competitive.”¹³⁷⁹

It is perhaps because of this competitive spirit that Indo-Fijians are distrusted by Fijians, since they are always on the look-out for inequality as Ratu Sukuna alludes to in a speech to the Legislative Council in 1946:

We all know that in this colony each race has its own national characteristics, its own particular outlook. ...The Indian wants equality; he wants us to be equal, to attend the same schools, to eat in the same houses, to swim in the same swimming baths [pools]. Further, he is continuously on the look-out for racial discrimination. He thinks that everybody in this world was born on an equal footing whether he comes from the Arctic Pole or from the Equator, or speaks Russian or Hindi, we should all be able to sit down as brothers and eat and sleep together.¹³⁸⁰

¹³⁷⁸Ratuva, p. 212

¹³⁷⁹ In a submission made by an Indo-Fijian doctor to the Constitution Review Commission following the 1987 coup, as cited in Scarr, Deryck. 1988. *The Politics of Illusion: The military coups in Fiji*. Kensington, NSW: NSW University Press; Illustration;

¹³⁸⁰Scarr, Deryck. 1982. *The three- legged stool*. London: MacMillan Education. Speech in Legislative Council on the Education Plan, 20 Nov 1946: p. 402

Ratu Sukuna's perception may be considered relevant in the context of the '*equality versus difference*' discourse where an individual, or group such as women or Indo-Fijians in this case, claim equality at all costs without due consideration to the intersectional differences and inequalities between and among individuals in the group, such as gender, status, class, ability, age, location, etc.

Cock (1996) warns that over preoccupation with "equality" risks overlooking the elements of 'inequality and injustice,' since the notion of "what is to be done" to address the 'inequality' is replaced with identity politics and concerns of, "who am I?"¹³⁸¹ She insists that the focus must change from "difference to disadvantage" and to the social conditions that perpetuate it.¹³⁸² Cock's warning is relevant for both ethnic Fijians and Indo-Fijians in order to address the inequalities and injustices suffered by disadvantaged individuals on both sides of the ethnic divide. Zinn and Dill (1996) recognize that a limitation of the "difference" project is the failure to attend to the power differences that accompany 'difference,' which ignores inequalities that cause some characteristics to be seen as 'normal' while others are seen as 'different' and thus 'deviant.'¹³⁸³

The coups indicate that the majority of ethnic Fijians have had little opportunity to embrace and appreciate the values and ideals of multiculturalism and multiracialism. Tuitoga identifies the poor level of education as one of the many reasons for the persistence among rural Fijians such as the men of Naloto, of a strong sense of binary opposition to the *taukei-vulagi* ideology and notes that,

Rural Fijians in Naloto have little conception of multiculturalism or multiracialism. The primary schools the villagers attended were...predominantly Fijian...Contact with Indo-Fijians were minimal, confined to dealing with the middlemen who came to collect their agricultural produce...[with] no opportunity for any form of worthwhile dialogue except of a business nature as they haggled for mutually beneficial prices. Little wonder then that they view multiracialism with suspicion because personal experience had not provided them with the opportunity to interact with

¹³⁸¹ Cock, 1996: p. 28

¹³⁸² Rhode, D. 1992. The politics of paradigms: gender difference and gender disadvantage; as cited in Cock, 1996: p. 28

¹³⁸³ Zinn, Maxine Baca; Dill, Bonnie Thornton. 1996. Theory difference from multiracial feminism. *Feminist Studies*, Summer, 22 (2): p. 323

people of another ethnicity. That is why they clamour so loudly for a change in the Constitution to ensure the rights and dominance of Fijians.¹³⁸⁴

However, it would seem that the lack of contact and interaction rather than the lack of education as Tuitoga claims, that is the reason for the lack of understanding and tolerance between the two major races, as Ratu Sukuna asserts:

Equality comes soon enough in my experience. It comes through confidence, it comes through knowing each other, it comes through contact. It... cannot be forced and when it is forced, it is of very little value.¹³⁸⁵

For Ratu Sukuna and those who accept and appreciate the values of multiracialism and multiculturalism, equality is achieved through increased contact and understanding, whether through education in mixed schools, at community level, the workplace and in urban areas where people of different races, religion, etc. live side by side. Ratu Mara himself was a product of multiracialism. He was the only Fijian student at Marist Brothers High School, in a class of 33 boys from different races, that was to shape and form his platform for multiracialism in political life. Ratu Mara believed that,

People of different races, opinions and cultures can live and work together for the good of all, can differ without rancour, govern without malice, and accept responsibility as reasonable people intent on serving the interests of all.¹³⁸⁶

Yet, for many Fijians who have had little interaction or integration with other ethnic groups at the community and national level, the liberal discourse in support of the multiracial ideals of the 1997 constitution, is irrelevant. Rakuita alludes for example, to how different 'exponents of the (1997) constitution actively propagated prevailing liberal discourses as the only way toward peace and harmony, while another had touted the new constitution by saying that, "judging by the liberal tone of the document and the international acclaim it had received, it was indeed a document worthy of celebration."¹³⁸⁷ The celebration only lasted three years before the constitution, "once so widely praised," was torn up yet again

¹³⁸⁴ Tuitoga, 2004: pp. 199-200;

¹³⁸⁵ Scarr, 1983: pp 402-3

¹³⁸⁶ Mara, Kamisese Ratu Sir. 1997. *The Pacific Way: a memoir*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, cited in Tuitoga, 2004: p.200;

¹³⁸⁷ Rakuita, 2002: p. 95

in the next coup.¹³⁸⁸ As Rakuita claims, this was not how the indigenous mindset had perceived the constitution:

... especially in light of the ensuing election results that enabled an ethnic Indian, for the first time in the country's history, to become the prime minister in a land to which the indigenous exclaimed exclusive rights. This momentous change in the political landscape whipped up old indigenous fears that stemmed from what they perceived as a distortion of the taukei-vulagi (native-foreigner) relationship.¹³⁸⁹

Furthermore, what came to be perceived as arrogant attitudes by Indo-Fijian leaders once they took office provoked the anger and reproach of indigenous Fijians, which consequently led to the perpetration of acts of humiliation against Prime Minister Chaudhry and others as witnessed in Parliament on May 19, 2000.

- II. So how can the dilemma of identity politics and a true sense of belonging be resolved in Fiji? It could begin by Indo-Fijians acknowledging that indigenous Fijians as indigenous people of Fiji, have their own cultural institutions and systems that are different from the rest of Fiji's citizens, instead of always trying to compete with them. It means that equality can be achieved despite differences. Furthermore, in Chapter 8, a useful model of peace and reconciliation featuring a benevolent male chief, a female high chief, an Indo-Fijian woman, and a group of descendants of indentured labourers, is proposed as a potential model for resolving the *vulagi* dilemma that many Indo-Fijians have lamented. This can also be useful for other communities who have come to regard Fiji as home but have remained silent observers without complaining, like the Solomoni, Banabans on Rabi or Tuvaluans on Kioa.
- WOMEN'S AGENCY IN POST-2000 COUP AND HOSTAGE CRISIS**

This section examines the capacity of women and women's organizations to express agency following the May 2000 coup and the hostage crisis. First, is an examination into the expression of agency by the women MPs who were being held hostage in the Parliamentary complex, to be able to act within the confines of the highly militarised, ethnicised and masculinised conditions under which they were held. Mahmood (2001) suggests that we must "think of agency not only as a synonym for resistance to relations of

¹³⁸⁸ Lal, 2012: p. 175

¹³⁸⁹ Rakuita, p. 95

domination, but as a capacity for action that historically enables and creates specific relations of subordination.”¹³⁹⁰

In the first few months of the People’s coalition government, women’s organizations enjoyed a productive working relationship as they collaborated with the state to implement the five critical areas of concern on the Beijing commitments.¹³⁹¹ The armed take-over on May 19 2000 however, shattered once again the hopes and optimism of the women’s movement. The progress that women enjoyed from the mid-1990s to the 1999 elections and during the coalition government’s one year in office, had suffered another setback.¹³⁹² The socio-economic and political consequences of the 1987 coups had taught women’s groups the importance of strengthening women’s capacity in peace-building and conflict transformation, as they struggled to cope with the shifting demands of service delivery, to advocacy for peace and reconciliation, and a speedy return to democratic governance.¹³⁹³

The struggle by individual women paralleled that of the women’s movement in general, which recognized through the lesson of 1987 that strength comes from staying united and proving that women of all races can work together despite the vitriol and hatred being spewed out in the media by those holding the government hostage in Parliament. For the majority of women’s groups, while the hostage crisis and the prevailing conditions of lawlessness was shocking and horrifying, they felt compelled to tone down their opposition to the illegal take-over to avoid putting themselves in harm’s way as likely targets of vengeance and aggression.¹³⁹⁴

Peace and Reconciliation

Women were among the first group to condemn the coup and the hostage crisis.¹³⁹⁵ The YWCA attracted early press attention by condemning Speight’s actions and calling on women to demonstrate their resistance to his call on indigenous rights’ by wearing black.¹³⁹⁶ The FWCC, in a letter to the daily newspaper, described the action of rebel soldiers holding the government hostage in Parliament as a “severe blow to the efforts of all those who have worked tirelessly towards the goal of peace and multicultural prosperity

¹³⁹⁰ Mahmood, Saba. 2001. Feminist theory, embodiment, and the docile agent: some reflections on the Egyptian Islamic revival. *Cultural Anthropology*, 6 (2). P. 203; cited in Charrad, 2010: p.517;

¹³⁹¹ *ibid*

¹³⁹² Alexander, 2006: p. 28

¹³⁹³ Jalal, I. 2002: p.15

¹³⁹⁴ George, p. 147

¹³⁹⁵ Alexander, *ibid*

¹³⁹⁶ George, p. 147; see also Fiji Times, 21 May 2000;

in our country.”¹³⁹⁷ Within two days of the take-over, the Fiji National Council of Women (NCWF) initiated and coordinated daily lunch-hour peace vigils at the Holy Trinity Anglican Cathedral in central Suva.¹³⁹⁸ Women, relatives and friends of the hostages and citizens from Fiji’s diverse faith communities who were concerned about what was happening in Parliament, gathered for daily prayers at the Cathedral dressed in black to “mourn” the ‘threat of violence’ that now hung over the nation, and to express hope for a speedy and peaceful resolution to the crisis.¹³⁹⁹

The peace vigils soon became a platform for women’s peace-building and reconciliation efforts from which various other campaigns calling for the restoration of democracy in Fiji was formed.¹⁴⁰⁰ Participants to the peace vigil began to draft a series of letters to the President Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara and the GCC, calling for a return to constitutional governance in Fiji.¹⁴⁰¹ As an ecumenical vigil, participants were encouraged to consider alternative platforms to further gender and peace-building activism following the coup.¹⁴⁰² The peace vigils grew into the Fiji Blue Ribbon campaign, and then into the Fiji Blue Democracy campaign. It was disheartening however for those attending the vigils and advocating for democratic restoration, to find some of their women colleagues openly supporting the rebels in Parliament, and the military-appointed interim government of Laisenia Qarase.¹⁴⁰³

Inside the Parliamentary chamber, the five female hostages were also exercising subtle forms of agency to ensure their own safety, security and comfort under the heavily armed and guarded conditions. One of the hostages revealed in an interview upon her release that the first two weeks were the most terrifying, as the coup supporters who had gathered at the Parliament grounds would pass sexual remarks to the women whenever they walked to the bathroom.¹⁴⁰⁴ The women made sure not to go out alone to the bathroom and avoided going at night as it meant venturing outside the building block and exposing their vulnerability to the dark shadowy figures outside the complex. They kept the passage lights off when they slept so as not to be seen from outside. The spot the women chose to sleep

¹³⁹⁷ Fiji Times, 22 May 2000, in George, p. 147

¹³⁹⁸ Alexander, p.28

¹³⁹⁹ Fiji Times, 22 May 2000, 28 May 2000; in George, p. 148

¹⁴⁰⁰ Fiji Times, May 30 2000, p. 5;

¹⁴⁰¹ George, p. 148

¹⁴⁰² *ibid*, p. 153

¹⁴⁰³ *ibid*, p. 148; see also Fiji Times, 25 May 2000; 27 May 2000;

¹⁴⁰⁴ in Orsman, Bernard. 2000. *My 36 days of hell with George Speight’s rebels*. NZ Herald, 30 June 2000 in, www.nzherald.co.nz/world/news/article.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=14157

was not directly accessible from the main doorways, and they made sure not to sleep in the same spot. The women soon worked out a code and would alert each other whenever they heard the sound of familiar boot-steps at night. Their time in isolation was spent on deep spiritual reflection and they found peace and strength in daily Bible reading and prayer service. The hostages looked forward to letters, well wish cards, poems, books and food sent by families and friends through the daily Red Cross delivery coordinated by head of Fiji Red Cross, the late John Scott. In this human-made crisis, the women learnt first-hand how to keep safe, including drills to avoid being caught in an open fire between the rebels and the military in case of a potential military assault.¹⁴⁰⁵

In the aftermath of the hostage crisis, the interim government, and later elected government of Laisenia Qarase set up a Ministry of Reconciliation, staffed by predominantly ethnic Fijians with only two Indo-Fijians.¹⁴⁰⁶ A national advisory committee was set up comprising representatives from diverse groups such as the GCC, Fiji Council of Churches, government, various church representatives and individuals. The role of the Ministry however, was limited to reconciling indigenous Fijian groups rather than addressing the reality of inter-racial relations between the two major ethnic groups.¹⁴⁰⁷

Apart from trauma counselling services offered by FWCC for victims of family violence, a number of new initiatives were established or strengthened by civil society groups to offer trauma counselling for released hostages, and to promote peace-building, conflict resolution and reconciliation. This included the initiative to set up the Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding (PCP) which works with all communities to reduce, prevent and transform violence and conflict.¹⁴⁰⁸ Femlink Pacific, a feminist media group that grew out of the peace vigils became a strong advocate for rural women and the media.

The adoption on 31 October 2000 of the landmark UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR) on Women, Peace and Security, inspired Femlink to focus specifically on lobbying government for the implementation of UN SCR1325.¹⁴⁰⁹ The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations,

¹⁴⁰⁵ Interview with former female hostage, in Orsman, 2000;

¹⁴⁰⁶ Jalal, Imrana P. 2002. Gender and race in post-coup d'état Fiji: snapshots from the Fiji islands. *Development Bulletin*, No.59, pp.15;

¹⁴⁰⁷ Jalal, 2002: p. 15

¹⁴⁰⁸ Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding mission statement in: <http://pcpfiji.org/about/vision-mission-and-values/>

¹⁴⁰⁹ See, George, p. 153' For further information on Femlink Pacific see, www.femlinkpacific.org.fj/

peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction. It also underlines women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.¹⁴¹⁰ UN Resolution 1325 urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts.¹⁴¹¹ It also calls on all parties to a conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse in situations of armed conflicts.¹⁴¹²

A further initiative to address the increasing incidence of armed conflicts in Fiji and the Pacific was undertaken by the Peace and Disarmament campaign desk of the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC). It carried out a survey to determine the feasibility of setting up a Pacific Conflict Transformation Network (PCTN) in collaboration with the Peace Foundation New Zealand and other New Zealand-based groups.¹⁴¹³ The Network aimed to strengthen the capacity of existing groups and organizations in mediation, negotiation skills and conflict transformation tools, to be able to respond to the frequent occurrence of armed conflicts in Fiji and the Pacific region.¹⁴¹⁴

Initiatives towards peace-building and conflict transformation highlighted the need to shift from the welfare-oriented services of the early 1980s, to building and strengthening the capacity of service delivery organisations to respond in a timely manner to the diverse impacts of the political upheavals and armed conflicts. For their efforts, women faced the risk of a backlash in their attempt to promote peace, human rights and the rule of law across the racial divide following the political crisis, as the armed forces increasingly used the threat of gun violence, to achieve political ends.¹⁴¹⁵

¹⁴¹⁰ Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues (OSAGI) See, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>

¹⁴¹¹ *ibid*

¹⁴¹² *ibid*

¹⁴¹³ Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC). 2004. A survey to determine the feasibility of a Pacific Conflict Transformation Network, Unpublished report, Suva: December 2004.

¹⁴¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁴¹⁵ Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC) Report. 2004. Unpublished report on 'The Role of Women in the Prevention of Armed Conflicts: for Sustainable Peace and Human Security in Fiji;' and Report on the 'Legal Literacy Workshop Report', Jointly organised by FNCW and PCRC, March 3-4, 2004; pp 12-13; see also Jalal, 2002: p.18

Violence against Women

Women's progress was severely curtailed and significantly affected by the attempted coup and the ensuing hostage crisis and political instability.¹⁴¹⁶ Alexander observes that widespread militarisation of Fijian society after the coups led to a general increase in violence across the board.¹⁴¹⁷ Al-Ali affirms that violence against women is often endemic during conflict and post-conflict situations partly because of the general state of anarchy and chaos, which often leads to heightened aggression and militarisation.¹⁴¹⁸ The high incidence of violence against women during conflict situation is a further consequence of the dominant construction of masculinity that is promoted during the conflict.¹⁴¹⁹ As the May 2000 coup and the hostage crisis protracted, a dominant pattern emerged of a gun-wielding indigenous Fijian masculinity that was hero-worshipped by those who had gathered in Parliament to support Speight and the rebels. This image was projected by television directly into the people's living rooms on a daily basis.

At the height of the 2000 coup, reports emerged of women being allegedly raped and sexually abused in Tailevu and Muainaweni areas where outbreaks of inter-racial violence was more serious.¹⁴²⁰ In response, FWCC sent out teams to the provinces to document incidents of violence and draw attention to the 'human rights violations' being perpetrated against Indo-Fijian women and men by indigenous Fijian men.¹⁴²¹

A survey produced by FWCC in 2001 titled, "*The Impact of the May 19 Coup on Women in Fiji*,"¹⁴²² noted that sexual violence was used systematically as a means of terrorizing Indo-Fijian families, and women in particular.¹⁴²³ FWCC reported that six women admitted sexual violence against them that was coup-related, 34 percent of women surveyed said they did not feel safe in their own homes, while one out of three women felt it was not safe to send their children to school especially girl children, who were kept at home out of fear for their safety.¹⁴²⁴ Fourteen (14) percent of the women surveyed shared they had experienced either verbal or physical abuse that was coup-related, including racist abuse, threats of

¹⁴¹⁶ Jalal, 2002: p. 5

¹⁴¹⁷ Alexander, 2006: p. 29

¹⁴¹⁸ Al-Ali, 2005:

¹⁴¹⁹ Al-Ali, 2005:

¹⁴²⁰ George, 2012: p. 149

¹⁴²¹ George, 2012: p. 149

¹⁴²² FWCC. 2001. *The Impact of the May 19 coup on Women in Fiji*, unpublished report, produced August, 2001.

¹⁴²³ *ibid*: pp. 10-11

¹⁴²⁴ FWCC, 2001: pp.10-11;

violence and stoning. Over half of the women reported feeling worried and experienced confusion, frustration, and depression as a result of the coup. Suicide rates in the year following the coup were higher than the year before the coup. Furthermore, 58 percent of the women complained of having suffered physical side effects of the emotional disturbances such as headaches and problems with sleeping. Eleven percent of married women said that verbal abuse from their partners increased or began because of the coup, while 5 percent said that physical abuse from their partners had increased since the coup.¹⁴²⁵ There were also allegations that women who were supporting Speight and his rebels in Parliament were subjected to harassment and sexual abuse.¹⁴²⁶

Enloe suggests that peace requires not just the absence of armed and gender-based conflict at home, but also the absence of poverty and the conditions which create it.¹⁴²⁷ During the 2000 crisis, FWCC and Save the Children Fund (SCF) noted in their surveys an increase in the prevalence and severity of domestic violence, as families sought to deal with the psychological and financial pressures that resulted from the 2000 coup.¹⁴²⁸ Many women were once again placed in a situation of extreme vulnerability as social and economic impacts of the 2000 coup began to take its toll and hit women hard.¹⁴²⁹

The survey by Save the Children Fund (SCF) titled, *Study of the Impacts of the Political Crisis on Children and Families in Fiji* (2001), undertaken in the twelve months following the coup, discovered that income loss during this period equated to far more than a mere reduction in the 'purchasing power'.¹⁴³⁰ Increasing economic pressures have intensified a range of social problems such as domestic violence, child abuse, suicide, drug and alcohol abuse, as people of all ages felt "fearful, frustrated, angry and powerless."¹⁴³¹ The report further notes that poverty and other problems prevalent before May 2000 became considerably worse afterwards, seriously affecting women and children.¹⁴³²

¹⁴²⁵ Ibid, see also presentation by Edwina Kotoisuva, FWCC in PCRC Report. 2004. 'The Role of Women in the Prevention of Armed Conflicts for Sustainable Peace and Human Security in Fiji.' The Legal Literacy Workshop was organised by PCRC in association with the Fiji National Council of Women (FNCW), March 3-4, 2004, pp 12-13;

¹⁴²⁶ George, 2012: p. 149;

¹⁴²⁷ Al-Ali, Nadjie. 2005. Reconstructing Gender: Iraqi women between dictatorship, war, sanctions and occupation. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26 (4/5): p. 742

¹⁴²⁸ Al-Ali, 2005: p. 742

¹⁴²⁹ George, p. 149

¹⁴³⁰ Carling, M. and C. Peacock-Taylor. 2001. *Study of the Impacts of the Political Crisis on Children and Families in Fiji*. Suva: UNICEF Pacific; as cited in George, p.149

¹⁴³¹ Carling and Peacock-Taylor, 2001: p.9; cited in George, p. 149;

¹⁴³² Carling and Peacock-Taylor, 2001, cited in Jalal, 2002: p. 16

George argues that the interim government ignored the depths of economic hardship confronting all ethnic groups in the wake of the 2000 coup.¹⁴³³ Fiji's daily newspapers regularly featured reports of wage earners describing the impact of their retrenchment from employment in industries such as garment and tourism/hospitality.¹⁴³⁴ These two sectors were predominantly dependent on female labour, and as in 1987, suffered serious downturn as international sanctions imposed on Fiji began to take effect.¹⁴³⁵ FWCC reported that 72 percent of women in paid employment who were interviewed in their survey, had either lost their job, suffered pay-cuts or reduced working hours as a result of the coup.¹⁴³⁶

Reform-Oriented Agency: Legislative Changes

Similar to the rebuilding efforts towards democratic governance in the post-1987 coup period, the FWRM began another strenuous campaign for a return to constitutional democracy as a necessary precondition for reasserting women's rights.¹⁴³⁷ Jalal states that women and women's groups were instrumental in defending the 1997 constitution and democracy following the May 2000 coup, through the NGO coalition on human rights and democracy.¹⁴³⁸ The NGO coalition harnessed its voluntary intellectual and financial resources to mount an appeal challenging the abrogation of the 1997 constitution by the military.¹⁴³⁹ While Speight and his rebel group had been successful in holding hostage an incapacitated Chaudhry government, they had been prevented from seizing control of the "political centre" of government by the military.¹⁴⁴⁰

The military had appointed former Senator and banker Laisenia Qarase to head a new interim regime, which soon showed its pro-indigenous stance with Speight's group through the formulation of a blueprint for affirmative action for indigenous Fijians.¹⁴⁴¹ The policy

¹⁴³³ George, p. 149

¹⁴³⁴ *ibid*

¹⁴³⁵ Fiji Times, June 5, June 13, 2000; as cited in George, p. 149; According to George (2012:149), the Fiji Trade Union Congress (FTUC), Australian and New Zealand unions placed an international ban on freight handling to and from Fiji. The rapid impact of these sanctions meant that within less than a month, over 2000 jobs were lost within local garment industry and tourism-sectors which were largely dependent upon women's labour (see Fiji Times 10 June 2000, 9 June 2000);

¹⁴³⁶ FWCC Report, 2001

¹⁴³⁷ George, p. 150

¹⁴³⁸ Jalal, 2002: p. 16

¹⁴³⁹ Jalal, p. 16

¹⁴⁴⁰ Scobell, 1994: p. 187

¹⁴⁴¹ Qarase, L. 17 July, 2001. Blueprint for the Protection of Fijian and Rotuman rights and interests & the advancement of their development: A presentation to the GCC by interim PM. In Te Karere Ipurangi, Maori News online <https://maorinews.com/karere/fiji/blueprint.htm>

outlined plans to establish a new constitution by 2001 that would enshrine Fijian rights to political and economic self-determination and correct the perceived lack of opportunities faced by Fijians in areas such as private enterprise and education.¹⁴⁴² While the interim regime may have declared its opposition to the methods of the coup plotters, the release of the blueprint clearly indicated their support for Speight's objectives.¹⁴⁴³ The blueprint was imposed without any consultation or monitoring safeguards, resulting in widespread abuse and corruption.¹⁴⁴⁴

As part of the NGO coalition on human rights and democracy and the Fiji Blue Ribbon Campaign for democracy, women's organizations like FWRM, FWCC and NGOs like the Citizen Constitutional Forum (CCF) were assisted by the Fiji Human Rights Commission to form a multi-ethnic, pro-democracy civil society movement that actively supported a High court case by a displaced farmer named Chandrika Prasad. In July 2000, Prasad had sought the court to declare that the abrogation of the 1997 constitution by the military was unconstitutional as it interfered with his human rights.¹⁴⁴⁵ Later referred to the Court of Appeal, the case was heard before Justice Anthony Gates, who declared that the attempted coup of May 19 was unconstitutional, and that the abrogation of the 1997 constitution was unconstitutional and of no legal effect, hence remains the supreme law of the land. The court also ordered that the status quo remains and that the pre-coup Parliament should be recalled by the President as soon as practicable.¹⁴⁴⁶ The successful court challenge halted any further attempts by the interim Qarase government to formulate a new constitution.¹⁴⁴⁷

The President's failure to comply with the court order to reinstate the previous Chaudhry government may be interpreted in many ways. Rather than being seen to "bow" to a simple Indo-Fijian farmer who had brought the court case in the first place and the NGOs that had

¹⁴⁴² George, p.148; As George further notes, many of the 'affirmative action' provisions in the Blueprint later appeared in the SDL government's Social Justice bill, which came into effect in February 2002, following the general elections in August 2001 which was won by Qarase's SDL (Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua) Party.

¹⁴⁴³ Tarte, 2001; cited in George, p. 148

¹⁴⁴⁴ Jalal, p.15; see also, Ratuva, S. 2014. Ethnicity, affirmative action and coups in Fiji: Indigenous development policies between the 2000 and 2006 coups. *Social Identities Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture*, Vol 20 (Issue 2-3), pp 139-154;

¹⁴⁴⁵ George, p. 150

¹⁴⁴⁶ The Chandrika Prasad Case Ruling, Fiji People's Coalition Government Press Release, 16 Nov, 2000; in <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO0011/S00126.htm>, Nov 16, 2000;

¹⁴⁴⁷ George, p. 150; Lal, B. V. 2003. 'Fiji's constitutional conundrum,' *The Round Table*, 92(372): 671-85.

supported him, the President's non-compliance was an attempt to appease the 'ego' of the rebels and their indigenous Fijian supporters. It also sought to preserve the 'ego' and 'hegemonic masculinity' of the military that had abrogated the constitution, and lastly, to save the 'face' and masculinity of the all-male interim government of Qarase. The President called for fresh elections instead.

The Chandrika Prasad case that restored the 1997 constitution was significant for women, as it clearly demonstrated what can be achieved when a strong, united, pro-democracy civil society group of committed women and women's organisations, can work together under the harsh militarised conditions to challenge the illegal actions of those in power.¹⁴⁴⁸

FWRM was also instrumental in advocating for changes to the Family Law legislation while FWCC continued with proposed reforms on the sexual offences bill. Jalal had been appointed Family Law reform commissioner during the SVT government and had conducted wide public consultation on the Family law bill between 1995 and 1999. The bill was presented to Parliament in May 2000 and would have become law on 23 May but for the intervention of Speight and his group on May 19.¹⁴⁴⁹

The bill had provoked a vicious backlash from the religious right, particularly the powerful predominantly indigenous Fijian Methodist church with accusations of it being "too western," "anti-Christian," "anti-Fijian," "pro-children's rights over parents," "anti-Fijian" culture and tradition, "anti-Biblical" on the role of women, etc.¹⁴⁵⁰ In fact, objections to the bill reflected not only opposition to the improved rights of women, but also the intersection between race, gender and democracy in Fiji.¹⁴⁵¹ As Jalal argues, while the bill reflects women's appeal to fundamental rights and freedoms that should be guaranteed in any democracy, the widespread opposition to the bill particularly from the powerful Fijian Christian elite, showed that detractors perceive democracy and improved women's rights as "a dangerous threat to their power in the public and private domains."¹⁴⁵² Furthermore, Jalal believes that objections to the bill by conservative/right wing elements are tied up with Fijian nationalism, a negative nationalism that is confused with the politics of identity. As she states:

¹⁴⁴⁸ George, p. 151

¹⁴⁴⁹ Jalal, 2002: p. 10

¹⁴⁵⁰ Jalal, 2002: p.10

¹⁴⁵¹ *ibid*

¹⁴⁵² Jalal, p.12

It is based on flawed thinking dangerous both to women and democratic change, that “in order to retain our identity we mustn’t change anything”, and that any change would threaten that nationalist identity.¹⁴⁵³

For Jalal, FWRM and the majority of women in Fiji who believe in the positive objectives of the bill, the likely response would be that any custom or tradition that sanctions the subordination of women cannot and must not be tolerated just because it is customary, that is by assuming that the Bill will “destroy indigenous Fijian society.”¹⁴⁵⁴ Jalal contends that this was a clever strategy based on highly flawed arguments that used racial tensions to prevent gender equality. She notes the misguided argument that the balance of power rests on women keeping their ‘subordinate’ place hence opposition to the bill was based on the underlying threat of women gaining power.¹⁴⁵⁵

The Family Law Bill was finally passed by the Lower House on 14 October 2003, which was lauded by FWRM Coordinator Virisila Buadromo as “a victory for families in Fiji, especially its women and children.”¹⁴⁵⁶ Indeed, the passing of the bill could not have happened without the consolidated effort and sheer agency of women like Jalal and organisations such as FWRM, FWCC and others.

Women for Gun Control Legislation

The implications of the violence generated by the 2000 coup saw a dangerous acceptance of violence as “norm,” with a general move towards greater acceptance and tolerance of violence due to a daily dosage of television images of lawlessness in the protracted hostage crisis on the grounds of Parliament.¹⁴⁵⁷ This was compounded by the media’s “glorification of guns” by projecting images on national television or the daily newspapers of gun-wielding soldiers and civilians in Parliament and checkpoints in surrounding areas.¹⁴⁵⁸ Hence the dominant construction of Fijian masculinity in the media was of ‘young gun-wielding Fijian males’ where guns represented power and authority for the rebels.¹⁴⁵⁹

¹⁴⁵³ Jalal, p.12

¹⁴⁵⁴ *ibid*

¹⁴⁵⁵ *ibid*

¹⁴⁵⁶ FWRM. 2003. Press statement: ‘Family Law bill passed’, October 27, 2003; in <http://www.wlumf.org/node/1198>

¹⁴⁵⁷ PCRC Report, 2004: p. 12

¹⁴⁵⁸ *ibid*

¹⁴⁵⁹ Capie, p. 49

In a research by Capie on gender and guns in Papua New Guinea, an old male interviewee expressed regret that the youths have become arrogant due to the guns they held in their hands, which has made them “like to be rough” that they no longer listened to the chiefs.¹⁴⁶⁰ The same could be said of the young men involved in the May 2000 crisis in Fiji, who had wide access to guns that were smuggled out of the FMF armoury.¹⁴⁶¹ An army spokesman admitted that the CRW soldiers were able to return to the FMF barracks in Suva after the take-over of Parliament on May 19 to bolster their supply of weapons.¹⁴⁶² This confirms the report by Alpers and Twyford (2003) that in Fiji, (as in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea), groups bent on rebellion and intimidation have treated state-owned armouries as “gun supermarkets” by taking weapons when needed, hence the challenge remains on improving the security and management practices of military armouries.¹⁴⁶³

Having access to guns had emboldened an attitude of arrogance among the young men who were holding members of the Chaudhry government hostage who had even confronted soldiers guarding the checkpoints near Parliament.¹⁴⁶⁴ Speight and his rebels exploited the power of the gun in their hands as a bargaining tool to force the GCC, the military and the President to accede to their demands.¹⁴⁶⁵

The hostage crisis culminated in the signing of the Muanikau Accord between the military and Speight’s group on 9 July 2000.¹⁴⁶⁶ The Accord promised to address the demands of the coup perpetrators for amnesty in exchange for the release of the hostages and the return of all weapons.¹⁴⁶⁷ Deposed prime minister Mahendra Chaudhry and the remaining hostages were finally released on 13 July 2000 after being held for 56 days.¹⁴⁶⁸

¹⁴⁶⁰ Capie, p. 49

¹⁴⁶¹ Robertson and Sutherland, 2000: pp. 14-15

¹⁴⁶² Interview by army spokesman Tarakinikini, Fiji Times, 4 July 2000, cited in Fraenkel, 2000: p.304

¹⁴⁶³ Alpers, Philip and Conor Twyford. 2003. *Small Arms in the Pacific*. Geneva: Small Arms Survey, xvi

¹⁴⁶⁴ Fraenkel, 2000: p. 305

¹⁴⁶⁵ Robertson and Sutherland, pp. 18-21; Fraenkel, 2000: p. 306

¹⁴⁶⁶ Fraenkel, et.al., 2007: p. 116

¹⁴⁶⁷ Fraenkel, J. and Stewart Firth (eds). 2007. *From Election to Coup in Fiji: the 2006 campaign and its aftermath*. Canberra: ANU

E-Press and Asia Pacific Press, p.116

¹⁴⁶⁸ *ibid*

By then the rebels and the chiefs that supported them were all jockeying for positions in the interim administration, “to carve out their places in the anticipated new order.”¹⁴⁶⁹ The rebels had called for an interim administration stacked with their representatives including the prime ministership for Fiji’s former Ambassador to Malaysia, Adi Samanunu Cakobau.¹⁴⁷⁰ They certainly did not want their sacrifice to be in vain. The newly installed President Ratu Iloilo announced however that,

as head of state and as a symbol of national unity, I cannot appoint a cabinet that is expressly committed to excluding a particular community that represents 43 percent of Fiji’s population.¹⁴⁷¹

The rebels were forced to accept a few assistant ministerial positions including the choice of Laisenia Qarase as interim prime minister.¹⁴⁷² Outraged by their changing fortunes the rebels trashed the parliamentary complex and stole the chamber’s ceremonial mace, which had symbolised Ratu Cakobau’s old war club.¹⁴⁷³ The historical significance of the mace in the history of Fiji was recorded by Derrick with the following symbolic exchange at the cession of Fiji to Great Britain in 1874:

The King [Cakobau] gives Her Majesty [Queen Victoria] his old and favourite war-club, the former, and, until lately the only known law of Fiji. In abandoning club law, and adopting the forms and principles of civilized societies, he laid his old weapon and covered it with the emblems of peace.¹⁴⁷⁴

The events that unfolded in Parliament on May 19 2000 and back in 1987, were directly contradictory to the spirit of Cession and the emblems of peace that the mace symbolically represented. The collusion of the descendants of Ratu Cakobau with the rebels went against the very principles that their ancestor had stood for when he surrendered his war club, and embraced the rule of law as the emblem of peace. Through the coups, the coup

¹⁴⁶⁹ Fraenkel, 2000: p.306

¹⁴⁷⁰ *ibid*

¹⁴⁷¹ Acceptance speech, 21 July 2000; cited in Fraenkel, 2000: p. 307

¹⁴⁷² Fraenkel, p. 307

¹⁴⁷³ *ibid*

¹⁴⁷⁴ Derrick, R.A. 1946. *A History of Fiji*, Vol 1. Suva: Government Press: p. 249; The club had been used as the mace of the colonial Legislative Council (LegCo), and was embellished with silver ferns and doves, and a silver crown at the head. It was returned to Fiji in 1932 courtesy of King George V, to become the mace of the LegCo of the colony and Fiji’s Parliament since independence.

makers and their supporters exchanged the law of the club with the law of the gun, against the rule of law of civilised societies.

The high incidence of gunfights between rebel soldiers, civilians and the FMF soldiers between the May takeover and the army mutiny in November 2000, affirms Capie's suggestion that in the intersection of violence and notions of masculinity, the most prominent symbol of militarism are the guns.¹⁴⁷⁵ It is significant to note from the gendered and racial dynamics of gun violence, that the majority of gun fatalities in the post-2000 coup period have been ethnic Fijian men.¹⁴⁷⁶ It contradicts the justification of the coup on indigenous rights and the "othering" of Indo-Fijians, since the majority of casualties from the ensuing gun battles have been young indigenous Fijian men themselves.

While women do not have access to guns (except perhaps for women in the army), they have had to bear the disproportionate impacts of gun violence.¹⁴⁷⁷ For every Fijian man with a family that died, is injured or disabled from gun violence during this period, women are forced to become the breadwinner and primary care giver in their families.¹⁴⁷⁸ The widow of a police officer who was gunned down by rebel youths on a rampage in Suva at the height of the hostage crisis, shared that the loss of her husband had impacted on her children especially her teenage sons who had become more rebellious and angry.¹⁴⁷⁹ She was forced to contain her grief in order to cope with the roles of both father and mother for her children, and her role as a primary school teacher.¹⁴⁸⁰ The struggle of her family to make sense of their loss, point to a crucial need that have been raised by other women on the need to provide more support services such as on-going trauma counselling for victims and survivors of coup-related (gun) violence.

The widow of a CRW soldier who was among the five CRW soldiers killed during the army mutiny in November 2000, expressed agency by constantly calling for justice and "truth" regarding the death of her husband. She alleges he was "murdered" at the military camp

¹⁴⁷⁵ Capie, 2011: p. 42

¹⁴⁷⁶ This includes 8 from the army mutiny, 1 policeman and 1 youth in the hostage crisis, and a few more escaped prisoners following the May 2000 coup;

¹⁴⁷⁷ Capie, p.42;

¹⁴⁷⁸ Page, 2009: p. 2

¹⁴⁷⁹ PCRC Unpublished Report. 2004. Part II: The Role of women in peace-building and the prevention of armed conflict through Gun control in Fiji; p.3

¹⁴⁸⁰ *ibid*

which had become a “killing field” on the night he died.¹⁴⁸¹ The post mortem revealed the cause of death to be “multiple blunt force injuries including head injuries and haemorrhage.”¹⁴⁸² The pattern of injuries confirmed that he had been severely assaulted, particularly to the head, resulting in bleeding around the brain.¹⁴⁸³ She felt very strongly that she needed to know the ‘truth’ about her late husband’s death as her children are now grown up and they have every right to know what really happened to their father and for closure.¹⁴⁸⁴ She asserts that a good starting point for the military’s “clean-up campaign” would be to reveal the ‘truth’ about what actually happened in the deaths of the soldiers including her husband.¹⁴⁸⁵ While the ‘truth’ about the cause of death and where, has been established, there is a need to know “who” was responsible for the injuries that killed her husband and the others, and “who” had given the orders for the killing, seeing that the soldiers operated under strict orders.¹⁴⁸⁶ The woman’s agency to keep pressing the military for justice and for information over what transpired in the deaths of the soldiers, has been a source of inspiration to other widows and women facing similar struggles such as those who lost loved ones in the 2006 coup. While the military which has remained quiet over the incident, her agency is inspired by the need for closure in her husband’s death, for the sake of her children and her own healing process.

As women were still picking up the pieces from the trauma of the hostage crisis and the army mutiny, women’s groups were shocked to learn that the Qarase government had introduced the Fiji Arms and Ammunitions amendment bill in Parliament in 2003. Through its work on arms control and disarmament, the Demilitarisation campaign desk of PCRC coordinated a legal literacy workshop with the Fiji National Council of Women (FNCW) in March 2004 for women to study the bill and make informed recommendation for changes.¹⁴⁸⁷

¹⁴⁸¹ Maika Bolatiki. Fiji Sun, 17/3/2009. Opinion: The death of CRW soldiers, in <http://fijisun.com.fj/2009/03/17/the-death-of-the-crw-soldiers/>

¹⁴⁸² *ibid*

¹⁴⁸³ Maika Bolatiki. Fiji Sun, 17/3/2009. Opinion: The death of CRW soldiers, in <http://fijisun.com.fj/2009/03/17/the-death-of-the-crw-soldiers/>

¹⁴⁸⁴ Maika Bolatiki. Fiji Sun, 17/3/2009. Opinion: The death of CRW soldiers, in <http://fijisun.com.fj/2009/03/17/the-death-of-the-crw-soldiers/>

¹⁴⁸⁵ *ibid*

¹⁴⁸⁶ *ibid*

¹⁴⁸⁷ Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC). 2004. The Role of women in peace-building and the prevention of armed conflict through Gun control. Unpublished report, p.3

The women wanted Part 2 on Manufacture to be repealed, as it allows for a person to apply to the Minister (for Internal Affairs) for a license to manufacture arms in Fiji. They feared that this provision could expose Fiji to unscrupulous arms dealers to set up arms manufacturing in Fiji, which could potentially enhance security risks, compromise the safety of citizens and open up the arms industry to corruption and abuse.¹⁴⁸⁸ Women also recommended the repeal of Part 3 on possession, use or carriage of arms, which allows a person to apply to the Commissioner of Police for an arms license based on a number of criteria. They expressed concern that civilian possession of arms could trigger off greater abuse, as the violence of 2000 had proven that even those who are legally licensed to carry arms (military) could not account for the arms in their possession and had leaked these out for illegal and criminal purposes such as the armed take-over and hostage-taking of Parliament,¹⁴⁸⁹ and even bank robberies. It was clear that the lesser access to arms for both civilians and the security forces, the safer it would be for Fiji.¹⁴⁹⁰

An outcome of the workshop was the formation of a Taskforce on Gun Violence with members drawn from affiliates of the NCW, FWCC and PCRC. Speaking to the media on the importance of the workshop a participant stated,

I feel I have the responsibility to the women in my village, the community and those in squatter settlements, to make them aware of this bill. We will try to propose some amendments to the bill and we're hoping that some sections will even be completely done away with.¹⁴⁹¹

Through collaboration and support from the Labour party women Senators (Senators Atu Bain and Mrs Koroi), women's NGOs presented their recommendations to the Senate before their (Senate) debate on the bill. One of the issues that came up in the discussion with the Senators was the cost of one gun compared to the cost of putting a child through primary school.¹⁴⁹² These issues were directly relevant when considering development issues such as Fiji's investment on education compared to the budget on the military and weapons. Some of the women's concerns were taken up by individual Senators (including male Senators) in their contribution to the debate on the bill, while the Attorney General

¹⁴⁸⁸ PCRC Report, 2004: pp. 4-5

¹⁴⁸⁹ PCRC report, 2004: p.

¹⁴⁹⁰ *ibid*

¹⁴⁹¹ Fiji Times 04/04/2004: Women talk arms;

¹⁴⁹² The question was posed by an elderly Fijian male Senator and it brought to mind the importance for women to have such figures on hand in their advocacy on development issues.

was tasked with looking into women's concerns before the Act was enforced.¹⁴⁹³ Women's agency was again reinforced through the collaboration and commitment of women Senators and women's NGOs.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to probe the intersectional dynamics at the core of inter-racial relations and identity politics that have been used to justify the coups in the name of indigenous rights, thereby alienating and marginalizing all non-indigenous people in Fiji.

It examines the construction of gender in the hostage taking and ensuing crisis beginning with the two groups of men facing each other in Parliament, a gun-wielding group of men displaying a 'militarized' warrior masculinity, that seized power by force through the 'bullet box', while the other, asserting their 'politicized' masculinity' as members of Parliament derive their mandate and power through the "ballot box." The group with the guns gained the upper hand, by holding the Parliamentarians hostage for up to 56 days.

The various manifestations of gender and its intersection with other social identities are investigated through the process of "othering," during the hostage crisis. It notes that women are subjected under the stereotypical attitudes of "protection" as vulnerable and in need of protection by the "warrior masculinity" of the soldiers guarding them. The women in turn, invoked their maternal and domestic roles, and cultural links in a bid to ensure their safety and security and that of their fellow captives. Applying a gender intersectional analysis of the armed takeover of Parliament, the study the construction of masculinity by age, ethnicity, class, location, s examples of 'age and masculinity' where the "1987 generation" are holding hostage, members of parliament (MPs) of the "post-independence" generation, with diverse understanding and appreciation of the principles of multiracialism and multiculturalism, which the younger 1987 generation neither understood nor appreciated.

The chapter also examines the construction of racial identity and its gendered implications for both Fijians and Indo-Fijians, that lie at the root of the coups. Among indigenous Fijians, racial identity during the hostage crisis was manifested through the *bati* ideology (warrior masculinity), ethno-nationalism and links to masculinity and the *taukei-vulagi* philosophy, which is key to understanding the difference between citizenship rights or nationality and indigeneity. It also explains the reason why, after more than 100 years in Fiji, Indo-Fijians

¹⁴⁹³ PCRC Report, 2004: part 2, pp.3-9;

are still regarded as *vulagi* or foreigners. The *taukei-vulagi* ideology holds an ethnic Fijian identity that is *vanua*-based, and traces one's origin to his or her roots or *vanua*. An attempt by the colonial government to impose a national identity of "kai Viti" or "Fijian" was therefore problematic for indigenous Fijians because their conception of nationality is *vanua*-based, where he or she claims "taukei" to land-based identity while remaining a 'vulagi' elsewhere. This status is reinforced by the custom of 'sevusevu' which is a traditional request to set foot on land that one is *vulagi* to. The ideology of "taukei-vulagi" also reduce indigenous Fijian women and Indo-Fijian women and men as "vulagi." The lack of understanding of the *taukei-vulagi* conception has often generated accusations of racism and ethno-nationalism against indigenous Fijians by human rights activists.

The second section of this chapter investigates the capacity of women to be able to express agency under the oppressive conditions of militarisation. It examines the various expressions of agency that arise from women's collaboration to address the injustices of militarisation and the impacts of the coups and hostage crisis. It shows that the women hostages in Parliament were able to generate the capacity to act to ensure their safety and that of their colleagues by invoking their moral authority as mothers and their cultural and traditional links to their captors. The agency of women NGOs was also examined through their capacity to press for the restoration of the 1997 constitution, and to address human rights violations, gender-based violence and violence against women. Women also initiated peace and reconciliation vigils, which soon translated into mobilisation for democratisation and political agency.

CHAPTER 7

GENDER CONSTRUCTION IN THE MILITARIZATION OF FIJI:

2006 Coup to 2014 Elections

Introduction

This chapter has three key objectives. First, it seeks to investigate the construction of hegemonic, hyper-militarised and ethnicised masculinity in the perpetration of gender-based violence by the military against opponents and critics following the 2006 coup in Fiji. The investigation is made from my perspective as a member of the women's movement in Fiji, whose capacity to express agency in the restrictive and oppressive state of militarization was severely limited. A gender and intersectional analysis shall be applied to examine the events leading up to and including the execution of the 2006 military coup, the military's response to perceived opponents, and to demonstrate how the military utilised a culturally-sanctioned, hyper-militarized masculinity to respond to detractors. The second objective examines the element of 'political patronage,' a key component of military rule that is demonstrated by the emergence of an elite military class of senior military officers, as clientele and beneficiaries of the coup leader and patron Bainimarama. While the majority of women have remained excluded from the excesses of political patronage that have enmeshed the ruling chiefly class and military elites in previous coups, and in the current coup, the third objective highlights the capacity of women and the women's movement, to assert their agency for resistance and reform within the highly masculinised, and militarised conditions that marked the Bainimarama coup of December 2006.

Gender and Militarization: 2001 Election to 2006 Election

This section applies a gender and intersectional analysis to investigate the construction and manifestation of hegemonic masculinity in the lead up to the 2006 coup and its aftermath, first by examining two key background events. The first involves the "uncivil" and "cold war" relations between the Qarase government and the military under Bainimarama, and the second involved a dispute between the military and the Fiji police force over an imported consignment of arms.¹⁴⁹⁴

¹⁴⁹⁴ Rarabici, V. 2006. 'Police, military fight over arms: Commissioner Hughes shocked', in Fiji Times, 15 March 2006

Civil-Military Relations 2001 to 2006

The 2001 elections was won by interim Prime Minister Qarase's newly formed *Soqosoqo ni Duavata ni Lewenivanua* (SDL) party with 31 seats, while Mahendra Chaudhry's FLP won 27 seats, which reflected the normative voting patterns along ethnic lines.¹⁴⁹⁵ To retain a clear majority and form the government, Qarase drew on the support of the Conservative Alliance *Matanitu Vanua* (CAMV) party with 6 seats. Five women made it into the new Parliament, four from the SDL party and one from the New Labour Unity (NLU) Party, which accounted for 5.7% of Parliamentary seats.¹⁴⁹⁶

The 1997 constitution provides that any party with a threshold of 10 percent of the seats (at least 7 seats) in Parliament is entitled to be invited to Cabinet, although it is not required to accept them.¹⁴⁹⁷ This provision obliged Qarase to invite FLP to join the Cabinet, but he did so in such unwelcoming terms as if to will Chaudhry to reject his offer. Qarase writes,

Our policies and your policies on a number of key issues of vital concern to the long-term stability of our country, are diametrically opposed. Given this, I genuinely do not think there is sufficient basis for a workable partnership with your party in my Cabinet.¹⁴⁹⁸

By making light of a constitutional requirement, reflects a trait of holding someone with contempt or disrespect (*veibeci*). The intention by Qarase to invite FLP and then making the offer so unpleasant as to will Chaudhry to reject it, is couched in the Fijian term, '*vadica*,' (ill will). It also reflects a Fijian phrase, "*me rawa ga nai sau ni taro*," (just to satisfy the question) which applies to Qarase's attempt of being seen to meet the obligation by inviting FLP to Cabinet, but actually offering ridiculous positions out of contempt. Not to be outdone, Chaudhry played along with Qarase's game by sticking to the letter of the law through legal challenges. The time-consuming legal wrangling however, compelled Chaudhry to remain in the Opposition.¹⁴⁹⁹

¹⁴⁹⁵ Global Security, Elections -August 2001, in <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/oceania/fiji-politics-2001.htm>

¹⁴⁹⁶ See, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3df4be3120.html>

¹⁴⁹⁷ Ghai, Y. and J. Cottrell.2007. A tale of three constitutions: Ethnicity and politics in Fiji. *International Journal of Constitutional Law*, Vol. 5 (4), p. 661;

¹⁴⁹⁸ Ghai, et.al., 2007: p. 661;

¹⁴⁹⁹ Ghai and Cottrell, 2007: p. 662

Qarase had an early opportunity to show his quality as a leader by “operationalising” the constitutional requirement in genuinely forming a multi-party government as the architects of the 1997 constitution had intended. Yet his course of action was designed to ‘impress’ his ethno-nationalist Fijian supporters in CAMV, who would likely view any “cooperation” with Chaudhry as a sign of “weakness.”

We therefore see the construction of masculinity (gender) shaped by ethnicity in the conflict between Qarase and Chaudhry. Their on-going political ‘seesaw’ and wrangling reflected a clash of toxic masculinity shaped by race and ethnicity, under the guise of “policy differences” or “clash of opinions, or as acknowledged by Qarase, [our] “diametrically opposed policies.”

This ‘clash of masculinity’ was also reflected in Qarase’s deteriorating relations with Bainimarama due to a range of personal and policy issues.¹⁵⁰⁰ These included the government’s favourable disposition towards those convicted of the 2000 coup and the army mutiny; the extension of Bainimarama’s contract as Commander FMF which he deemed necessary in order to see through the due process of the convictions; and the government’s introduction of three controversial bills in Parliament that Bainimarama argued would pose a direct threat to national security.¹⁵⁰¹

Bainimarama however “reserved his greatest censure” towards those involved in the 2000 coup and army mutiny.¹⁵⁰² Nothing about the government seemed to please the Commander, who strongly condemned the government’s attempt to favour the very elements that the military wanted to bring to justice.¹⁵⁰³ These included attempts by the Qarase government to reduce the sentence of soldiers convicted of mutiny at the Labasa military barracks, and that of two chiefs convicted of coup crimes but released after serving only eleven days of their 8-month prison sentence.¹⁵⁰⁴

Numerous attempts by the government to rein in the ‘runaway’ military by replacing Bainimarama or sending him off on a diplomatic posting, proved futile.¹⁵⁰⁵ When the government threatened not to renew Bainimarama’s contract in mid-2003, he refused to

¹⁵⁰⁰ Ratuva, 2007: p.35

¹⁵⁰¹ Ratuva, 2007: p.35

¹⁵⁰² Ibid

¹⁵⁰³ Ratuva, 2007: p.35

¹⁵⁰⁴ Ratuva, 2007: p.37

¹⁵⁰⁵ Ibid

accept that he could be replaced and physically confronted the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs, a former senior military officer.¹⁵⁰⁶ Ultimately government relented and extended Bainimarama's contract as Commander FMF for five more years,¹⁵⁰⁷ sealing the fate of the SDL government.¹⁵⁰⁸

When Bainimarama was warned by the Minister for Home Affairs that he would face disciplinary action if he spoke to the media without consulting him,¹⁵⁰⁹ a defiant Commander responded that, "the military is now on its own and is not answerable to anyone."¹⁵¹⁰ A newspaper article titled, "Sack me if you can: Frank," reported that Commodore Bainimarama had said if he were the Home Affairs Minister Vosanibola he would be "very scared of the military, especially at this time when we the military, do not recognise him as our minister." He stressed that,

[T]he military will not be intimidated. We are certainly not scared of a government which is so corrupt - half of them sitting in the government are ex-convicts. They have racist policies.¹⁵¹¹

It was obvious that indigenous masculine ego and pride stood in the way between Qarase and Bainimarama, two indigenous Fijian men with their own masculinities and that of the institutions they represented, one a "politicised" masculinity and the other a "militarised" masculinity, with neither side willing to back down.

Three lessons stood out in the failure of 'civil military relations' under the Qarase government. First, given the history of military intervention in politics, Qarase should have heeded the lesson that the Bavadra government learnt only too late after the 1987 coup, that a civilian government with minimal links to the military must be judicious enough to invest time and effort into its relationship with the military. Both the SDL government and the military as exclusive 'indigenous Fijian male' domains, have the potential for cooperation and mutual respect in the Fijian tradition of "veirokorokovi" (mutual respect). The Commander and members of the armed forces should be involved in any planned government reforms for the military before recommending or undertaking those reforms, especially where there are likely to be substantial cuts to the size of the military and its

¹⁵⁰⁶ Firth, et.al. p. 125

¹⁵⁰⁷ Ibid, pp. 125-6

¹⁵⁰⁸ Ratuva, p. 36

¹⁵⁰⁹ Prashila Devi. 2006. 'Bainimarama told to shut up,' Fiji Daily Post, Jan. 1, 2006

¹⁵¹⁰ Ratuva, 2007: p.38

¹⁵¹¹ Mithleshni Gurdayal, 2006. 'Sack me if you can: Frank,' Fiji Daily Post, Jan.6 2006;

budget.¹⁵¹² A second factor is based on Lawson's claim that, "[c]ivilian [Fijian] leaders are regarded as legitimate [only] insofar as they are part of the same social network of aristocratic families that provides military leaders."¹⁵¹³ Despite the military's break from the GCC in 2000, Bainimarama still relied on the support of members of the chiefly families to legitimise his coup. Both Ratu Epeli Nailatikau and Ratu Epeli Ganilau as former FMF Commanders, and descendants of the eastern dynastic chiefs that had ruled Fiji, and both sons in law of Ratu Mara, had joined the interim governments in 2000-2001 and post-2006. Since Qarase (nor Bavadra or Chaudhry), did not belong to the '*Ratu*' (chiefly) club, he was not accorded the respect rendered to that line of dynastic eastern chiefs, despite their waning power and influence, hence was treated with less courtesy and respect. A third factor that significantly affected the rapport between Qarase and Bainimarama was the 'patronage' relationship established when Bainimarama appointed Qarase as interim prime minister following the coup in 2000, which had placed Qarase firmly under the commander's control. Bainimarama came to regard his original handover to the Qarase-led interim civilian government in 2000 as conditional,¹⁵¹⁴ and which he considered a firmer mandate compared to the people's endorsement of Qarase's SDL party at the 2001 elections.¹⁵¹⁵ After all, he had promoted Qarase to the leadership position in the first place, and had reportedly questioned Qarase why he had stood for election when he was only meant to be an interim prime minister.¹⁵¹⁶ Being beholden to the commander, Qarase's interim government was expected to follow the conditions imposed by its patron Bainimarama. Instead, Qarase went on to form the SDL party with other associates and contested the 2001 elections on a platform that promoted pro-Fijian interests.¹⁵¹⁷ This also reveals that patronage relations have merit only as long the client remains obliged to the patron, otherwise it would come back to bite them as the chiefs would see later.

¹⁵¹² Scobbel, 1994: p.198

¹⁵¹³ Lawson, 2004: p. 5/6

¹⁵¹⁴ Firth, et.al. p.125

¹⁵¹⁵ Firth, et.al. p.127

¹⁵¹⁶ Firth, et.al. p.125

¹⁵¹⁷ Ramesh Sanjay. 2007. 1987 to 2007: The complexities of Fiji's Four Coups. *Fijian Studies*, Vol 5 (1), p.134; see also Stockwell, R. 2005. An Assessment of Alternative vote system in Fiji. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 43 (3): 382-393; cited in Ramesh, 2007: p. 134

Inter-Service Rivalry and Militarization of Security Services

A further source of tension in early 2006 between the military and the government involved a shipment of arms for the police force.¹⁵¹⁸ Bainimarama accused the government of deliberately arming the police against the military.¹⁵¹⁹ The 'Fiji Times' headline "Police, military fight over arms" on 15/3/2006 states that:

[T]he military and the Police Force are in a row over the purchase of arms for the Police Tactical Response Unit. Army commander ...raised concerned [sic] over the purchase of 123 pistol [sic], 30 submachine guns and assorted warfare equipment for the police unit last year. In a strongly worded statement yesterday, Commodore Bainimarama claimed that the weapons were meant for the military but was diverted to the police when the army was at loggerheads with the Government.¹⁵²⁰

Bainimarama questioned why \$1.5million was made available to the police force to buy arms, that could create discord among Fijians and destabilise the country.¹⁵²¹ He also warned Police Commissioner Andrew Hughes that he was "impinging on the sovereignty of this country by deliberately arming Fijians against Fijians."¹⁵²² Hughes labelled the media report as "inaccurate and exaggerated," and was equally surprised by the tone and motive of the military.¹⁵²³ In a response that Prime Minister Qarase could well have learnt from, Hughes arranged a meeting between senior officers of both security institutions,¹⁵²⁴ where he assured the military that the arms were solely for the use of the Police Tactical Response (PTR) team in extreme and life threatening situations, and to protect officers and members of the public from armed criminal attacks.¹⁵²⁵ Hughes also clarified that the pistols and other arms would be used by the police on peacekeeping mission overseas since the UN no longer provided these to civilian police.¹⁵²⁶

The Commander's accusation that the Commissioner was "impinging on the sovereignty of this country by deliberately arming Fijians against Fijians," can be viewed as racist against

¹⁵¹⁸ Ratuva, 2007: p.39

¹⁵¹⁹ Ibid;

¹⁵²⁰ Vasemaca Rarabici. 2006. 'Police, military fight over arms,' Fiji Times March 15, 2006;

¹⁵²¹ Ibid

¹⁵²² Ibid

¹⁵²³ Rarabici. 2006. 'Police, military fight over arms,' Fiji Times March 15, 2006;

¹⁵²⁴ Ibid

¹⁵²⁵ Ratuva, 2007: p. 39; Rarabici: Fiji Times, March 15, 2006;

¹⁵²⁶ Fiji Times, March 15, 2006;

a non-Fijian, and inaccurate since it was Bainimarama's own lack of control over the CRW unit that had leaked out the guns from the military armoury pitting "Fijian against Fijian" in the 2000 coup. The issue of police arms continued to be a thorn in the relationship between the military and police, affirming Decalo's observation that,

military hierarchies deeply resent and suspect armed structures outside their control that impinge upon their corporate hegemony over the use of force, provide alternate channels to political influence, and siphon off funds that might otherwise have been allocated to them.¹⁵²⁷

It was obvious that Bainimarama had felt 'insecure' about the arming of the police force, which posed a "threat" to the military's hegemonic masculinity and its monopoly over arms.

The conflict also marked the first public display of "inter-service" rivalry.¹⁵²⁸ Apart from the annual rugby competition for the "Sukuna bowl," that marks the display of masculine prowess on the rugby field,¹⁵²⁹ a potential latent rivalry in the future could arise between the different arms of the military such as the army (land force) and the navy.

Furthermore, it brings to the fore the need to scrutinise the relationship between the three branches of the security forces, including the Fiji Military force (FMF), Fiji Police force (FPF) and the Fiji Corrections service (FCS), which serve different but complementary security roles. The goal of the Police force is to create a safe and secure Fiji by ensuring internal or domestic security,¹⁵³⁰ while the military is tasked with the security and defence of Fiji and its citizens from external forces.¹⁵³¹ The Fiji corrections service seeks to provide a safe, secure and healthy environment for persons in custody,¹⁵³² and the community at large, which is summed up in the phrase, "[T]he successful re-integration of offenders into the community is the best security for society."¹⁵³³

¹⁵²⁷ Decalo, 1976: p. 207

¹⁵²⁸ Samuel P. Huntington. 1961. Inter-service competition and the political roles of the armed services. *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 55 (1); pp. 40-52

¹⁵²⁹ Fiji Police Force Annual Report, 2014: p. 3

¹⁵³⁰ The Sukuna bowl challenge is an annual rugby competition between the Fiji police force and the Fiji military force, which was introduced by Fiji's greatest statesman, Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna, to foster good relations between the two security forces. The bowl is in the form of a 'tanoa' or kava bowl; see, <http://www.idrc.org.uk/team/fiji/>

¹⁵³¹ Fiji Constitution 2013, Chapter 6. State services, s. 131: p.83;

¹⁵³² Fiji corrections service, Annual Report 2015: p. 8

¹⁵³³ Fiji corrections service website, <http://www.corrections.gov.fj>

The Police force has a slightly better record at gender balance in the workforce compared to the other two services. In 2014, the police force had a total of 560 women, which accounted for 21.4% of the workforce, compared to 2,054 men or 78.6% of the workforce.¹⁵³⁴ While the majority of women are found in the subordinate levels as the other two services, 125 women officers (22.3 %) occupy the middle level hierarchy, while 5 women (or 0.9 percent) are found in the top executive positions.¹⁵³⁵ The police force also has a better ethnic distribution with 1,772 ethnic Fijians, which comprises 67.8 % of the police force compared to the predominantly (95%) Fijian military. Indo-Fijians make up 28.6% (749) of the police workforce, while Other ethnicities make up the remaining 3.6% of the police workforce.¹⁵³⁶

One of the greatest concerns of women with regards to the security services, is the increasing militarisation of the Corrections service and the Police force following each coup, which shall be examined further in the second section of this chapter, on “political patronage.”

May 2006 Election

The national elections from May 6 to 13, 2006 was declared “free and fair” by local and international monitoring teams.¹⁵³⁷ The results returned a narrow victory for the re-elected SDL party with 36 seats based on over 80 percent of the indigenous Fijian vote, while FLP won 31 seats from 80 percent of the Indo-Fijian vote.¹⁵³⁸ The Conservative Alliance (CAMV) which was previously part of the SDL government in the last election had been dissolved and merged with the SDL prior to the election.

Women performed slightly better in the 2006 elections by winning 8 seats, three more than in 2001, and the same number as in 1999, which accounted for 11.27% of Parliament.¹⁵³⁹ Five of the women, all indigenous Fijians were from the SDL, FLP had 2 women, an Indo-Fijian and an ethnic Fijian, while the 2 seats won by the United Peoples Party’s (UPP) included a woman of mixed race. ¹⁵⁴⁰ SDL had attracted a number of

¹⁵³⁴ Fiji Police Force Annual Report 2015, p. 15;

¹⁵³⁵ *ibid*

¹⁵³⁶ Fiji Police Force Annual Report 2015, p. 15;

¹⁵³⁷ Yabaki, 2007

¹⁵³⁸ Yabaki, 2007

¹⁵³⁹ Nicholl, R. 2007. Broken Promises: women and the 2006 election, in Fraenkel, J. and Firth, S. From Election to Coup in Fiji: the 2006 campaign and its aftermath. Canberra: ANU Press, p. 161;

¹⁵⁴⁰ *ibid*

influential female candidates, who were either chiefs or came from chiefly families and therefore already enjoyed high status among indigenous voters.¹⁵⁴¹ On the other hand, FLP had done poorly in attracting women despite having a Fijian woman President over the past fifteen years.¹⁵⁴² Chandra Reddy explains that Indian women remain in a subordinate position because they live within a culture that condemn women's assertiveness as disrespectful to those with traditional power, meaning men.¹⁵⁴³ While such cultural norms would equally apply in the indigenous Fijian society, Fijian women tend to be more assertive than their Indo-Fijian sisters as election candidates.

The election results had sparked fears that an SDL victory would restore the pre-election "cold war" between the military and the government, but these were quickly allayed when a new multi-party government was formed after the election.¹⁵⁴⁴ Prime Minister Qarase had offered FLP seven seats in a seventeen-member Cabinet, generating a spirit of multi-party cooperation as the architects of the 1997 constitution had intended.¹⁵⁴⁵ Four women were appointed to Cabinet,¹⁵⁴⁶ including Adi Samanunu Cakobau whose appointment was an obvious attempt by Qarase to appease the *vanua* of Kubuna and CAMV elements in SDL. She was a nominee of the Prime Minister to the Senate and then brought into Cabinet as Minister without Portfolio in the Prime Minister's office.¹⁵⁴⁷ In a controversial move, Indo-Fijian male MP George Shiu Raj was appointed by Qarase as Minister for Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation,¹⁵⁴⁸ which could be interpreted either as a gender sensitive move by the government, or a lack of seriousness with women's issues since there were eight women in Parliament to take up the role. Nevertheless, there was optimism in the air, the mood of the people and their political perceptions had changed, and the military's behaviour changed accordingly with the commander pledging support for the multi-party government.¹⁵⁴⁹

The post-election 'honeymoon,' lasted barely four months before the Qarase government introduced three controversial bills in Parliament which reignited the animosity between

¹⁵⁴¹ Nicholl, 2007: p. 162

¹⁵⁴² *ibid*

¹⁵⁴³ *ibid*

¹⁵⁴⁴ Ratuva, 2007: pp.26-45

¹⁵⁴⁵ *ibid*, pp. 26-7, 44

¹⁵⁴⁶ Nicholl, 2007: p. 163

¹⁵⁴⁷ *ibid*

¹⁵⁴⁸ *ibid*

¹⁵⁴⁹ Nicholl, 2007: p. 164

the military and the government.¹⁵⁵⁰ Despite the government's justification for the revised Promotion of Reconciliation, Tolerance and Unity (PRTU) bill, there was public outrage against a provision to grant amnesty to those proven to have committed "politically motivated" crimes in the 2000 coup.¹⁵⁵¹ The other two bills were the Indigenous Claims Tribunal bill which regulated the return of ancestral land claims, and the *Qoliqoli* bill aimed at returning customary fishing grounds to indigenous owners.¹⁵⁵² Bainimarama said these bills would take Fiji back to "the days of grass skirts, canoes and cannibalism" which probably meant that the potential claims and counter-claims from these bills would cause further division among indigenous Fijians,¹⁵⁵³ seeing there were already increased conflicts over chiefly title claims.¹⁵⁵⁴

Bainimarama demanded that Qarase scrapped the three bills or resign within three weeks.¹⁵⁵⁵ The government responded by advising the President to remove the Commander, which the President purported to carry out when Bainimarama was away overseas in October 2006.¹⁵⁵⁶ His intended replacement declined to accept the appointment, stating he did not have the support of senior military officers.¹⁵⁵⁷

As the masculinist stand-off between two stubborn and proud Fijian men threatened to blow up, speculation was high of yet another military coup.¹⁵⁵⁸ Ratuva ruefully remarks that had the Qarase government heeded independent advice on the security risks of persevering with those controversial and unpopular bills, "Bainimarama's coup of December 2006 could have been avoided."¹⁵⁵⁹

When Bainimarama left for a family visit to New Zealand in late November 2006, NZ Minister for Foreign Affairs Winston Peters seized the opportunity to facilitate a last-ditch attempt to resolve the impasse between the two Fijian men, Commodore Bainimarama

¹⁵⁵⁰ Ratuva, 2007: p. 45

¹⁵⁵¹ Lal, 2009: p. 24; The provision grants, "amnesty to persons who make full disclosures of all facts" relevant to "politically motivated" acts committed in the 2000 coup.

¹⁵⁵² *ibid*

¹⁵⁵³ Yabaki, 2007;

¹⁵⁵⁴ Tuimaleali'ifano, Morgan. 2007. Indigenous title disputes: what they meant for the 2006 election, in Fraenkel, J. and S. Firth (eds). *From Election to Coup in Fiji: the 2006 Campaign and its aftermath*, Canberra: ANU E-Press and Asia-Pacific Press, Ch. 10: pp 261-271;

¹⁵⁵⁵ Lal, 2009: pp.29-30

¹⁵⁵⁶ Lal, 2009: p. 24

¹⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 30

¹⁵⁵⁸ Ratuva, p.27, 45

¹⁵⁵⁹ Cited in Robbie, D. 2007. in E:\Handle with care-The Listener, html

and Prime Minister Qarase, who flew to Wellington especially for this purpose.¹⁵⁶⁰ Qarase conceded to most of Bainimarama's demands which related mostly to Bainimarama's own personal security concerns.¹⁵⁶¹ These included the suspension of the controversial bills, termination of Police Commissioner Hughes' contract, a review of the role of the Police Tactical Response Unit, a review of the commercial arm and role of the Native Land Trust Board, an assurance that there would be no foreign military or police intervention, declaration of the events of 2000 as illegal, and that government accept advice from the DPP or Solicitor General if offered, to publicly drop charges against Bainimarama.¹⁵⁶² This last condition denotes a major personal motivation for the coup, which indicated that there was enough evidence for the police to charge Bainimarama with sedition, but which the New Zealand government averted.¹⁵⁶³ Upon their return to Fiji, Bainimarama continued to hold Qarase's assurances negatively, having made up his mind that nothing would stop his so-called "clean-up campaign"¹⁵⁶⁴ in the form of another coup.

Confiscation of Police armoury

A day before the coup, truckloads of heavily armed soldiers moved in to police compounds in Nasinu and Nasova in Suva, and the smaller weapons stores in Nadi, Lautoka and Labasa police stations and seized their weapons.¹⁵⁶⁵ In a brief press conference, Bainimarama said this was to prevent "dissidents" from using them against his soldiers as, "[W]e would not want to see a situation whereby the police and the military are opposed in an armed confrontation."¹⁵⁶⁶ It was obvious that Bainimarama and his senior military offices were feeling intimidated and disturbed by the arming of the Police Tactical Response team,

¹⁵⁶⁰ Fraenkel, 2007: p. 425;

¹⁵⁶¹ Meeting between Prime Minister Qarase and Commodore Bainimarama', Government House, [scoop.co.nz/media/pdfs/0612/WellingtonMinutes.pdf](http://img.scoop.co.nz/media/pdfs/0612/WellingtonMinutes.pdf), in

<http://img.scoop.co.nz/media/pdfs/0612/WellingtonMinutes.pdf>

¹⁵⁶² Meeting between Prime Minister Qarase and Commodore Bainimarama', Government House, [scoop.co.nz/media/pdfs/0612/WellingtonMinutes.pdf](http://img.scoop.co.nz/media/pdfs/0612/WellingtonMinutes.pdf), in

<http://img.scoop.co.nz/media/pdfs/0612/WellingtonMinutes.pdf>

¹⁵⁶³ Ratuva

¹⁵⁶⁴ Fraenkel, p. 426

¹⁵⁶⁵ Fraenkel, 2007: p. 42; see also, The Age, December 4, 2006. 'Fiji troops disarm police,' in <http://www.theage.com.au/news/world/fiji-troops-surround-police-unit-report/2006/12/04/1165080849786.html> ;

¹⁵⁶⁶ Fraenkel, 2007: p. 42; see also, The Age, December 4, 2006. 'Fiji troops disarm police,' in <http://www.theage.com.au/news/world/fiji-troops-surround-police-unit-report/2006/12/04/1165080849786.html>libid

hence the demand to have Police Commissioner Hughes' contract terminated. After disarming the police force, the FMF set up roadblocks around the capital in what was perceived as a "coup by stealth."¹⁵⁶⁷ A few weeks earlier, heavily armed soldiers had raided the Suva wharf to secure the release of a consignment of imported FMF weaponry and ammunition, which was held by the customs authorities on instruction from the police commissioner.¹⁵⁶⁸ Commissioner Hughes had insisted on assurances from the military that the weapons would not be used for a coup.¹⁵⁶⁹

Meanwhile Commissioner Hughes had pushed forward with investigations on Bainimarama for sedition charges over his recent threats to oust the Government.¹⁵⁷⁰ The impending sedition charge was believed to have triggered the motivation for the December coup, supporting the argument that no one would put their life unnecessarily at risk unless there was a greater personal motivation to do so. The logic is that, had there been no personal threat to the commander, there would have been no need for a coup.¹⁵⁷¹ On November 28 however, Hughes was forced to flee the country after his family received death threats, but not before claiming that the real reason Bainimarama was threatening the Government was because he wanted to stop police investigations into the alleged beating to death of rebel soldiers in the army mutiny of November 2000. Hughes had suggested that the Commander could be personally implicated in these deaths.¹⁵⁷²

Militarized Masculinity in lead-up to 2006 coup

Days before the coup, there was a heavy presence of military personnel in battle gear and truckloads across the main streets of Suva, which heightened tension that the military meant business.¹⁵⁷³ While the people of Suva recognized the arrogant display of masculinity as a signal for a potential military coup,¹⁵⁷⁴ Land Force commander Pita Driti assured, "[W]e are just taking precautionary measures now because a foreign intervention could be imminent and this is what we are going to do if it happens."¹⁵⁷⁵ This triggered an

¹⁵⁶⁷ The Age, Dec. 4, 2006;

¹⁵⁶⁸ Fraenkel, 2007: p. 425

¹⁵⁶⁹ Fraenkel, 2007: p. 425;

¹⁵⁷⁰ Fiji Live, 6/11/2006a, cited in Woods, 2008: p. 135

¹⁵⁷¹ Fraenkel, 2007: p. 425

¹⁵⁷² Yabaki, 2007;

¹⁵⁷³ Fraenkel, 2007: p. 425

¹⁵⁷⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵⁷⁵ Fiji Live website, www.fijilive.com

angry retort from the Mayor of Suva that, “the military seem to think they have a God-given right to run roughshod over all and sundry.”¹⁵⁷⁶

By the afternoon of December 4, troops in battle gear had secured a network of roadblocks and checkpoints across the capital Suva.¹⁵⁷⁷ Prime Minister Qarase was forced to fly back to Suva in a helicopter from a meeting with the Naitasiri provincial council to avoid a military roadblock that had been set up to arrest him on the motorway.¹⁵⁷⁸ The next morning, Tuesday 5 December, Prime Minister Qarase was summoned to Government House.¹⁵⁷⁹ With a show of disrespect aimed at humiliating the Prime Minister further, Fijian soldiers at the gate to Government House stopped his vehicle and insisted that he walked the remaining distance to meet with the President. Qarase refused and turned back to his residence declaring that under no circumstances will he resign or advise the President to dissolve Parliament.¹⁵⁸⁰ As the military tightened its grip on the capital, military officers moved to paralyse government by confiscating vehicles allocated to cabinet ministers.¹⁵⁸¹ Under the glare of local and international media, Fijian soldiers surrounded PM Qarase’s official residence and confiscated two official vehicles.¹⁵⁸²

Meanwhile, at the gate of the Prime Minister’s residence, a group of Fijian SDL women sang hymns behind the barricades just metres from the armed soldiers.¹⁵⁸³ Nearby, a female supporter struggled to comprehend what was happening to the besieged Prime Minister as she quietly sobbed, “[I]t's just terrible. This is Fiji. We're meant to be a peaceful country and here are all these soldiers frightening people with their guns.”¹⁵⁸⁴ The women were prepared to invoke their maternal role to provide a human shield for the Prime Minister if necessary.¹⁵⁸⁵ Who knows what could have happened if they had stood their ground and refused to allow the soldiers from forcing their way into the compound?

¹⁵⁷⁶New Zealand Herald, 1 Dec. 2006, ‘Fiji PM gives in to military demands to defuse crisis,’ in http://www.nzherald.co.nz/frontpage-breaking-news/news/article.cfm?c_id=1501093&objectid=10413140

¹⁵⁷⁷ The Age, Dec 4 2006;

¹⁵⁷⁸ The Age, Dec. 4, 2006;

¹⁵⁷⁹ Fraenkel, 2007: p. 421

¹⁵⁸⁰ Fraenkel, 2007: p. 421;

¹⁵⁸¹ Ramesh, 2007: p.136

¹⁵⁸² Fraenkel, 2007: p. 421

¹⁵⁸³ The Weekend Herald and New Zealand Herald, 13 Dec. 2006, in http://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/news/article.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=10414033

¹⁵⁸⁴Squires, 2006. The Christian Science Monitor, in <https://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1206/p07s02-woap.html>

¹⁵⁸⁵ This information was shared by an interviewee who was aware of the presence of the women at the Prime Minister’s residence and regretted that the women could have done more than passive resistance at the time.

4TH MILITARY COUP: DECEMBER 5 2006

When the 2006 coup finally happened, Fraenkel insisted it “was not a surgical strike, but rather a slow, methodical, and seemingly irresistible takeover of state power,” that was,

reasonably quickly and straightforwardly logistically consolidated, but nevertheless remained highly politically precarious. There was none of the mayhem of 2000, no trashing of Suva’s business district, no curfews, no more than the usual power and water cuts... the Senate, which was in session, was shut down, and soldiers raided the Prime Minister’s office, carting away papers and computer hard drives to be used as evidence in the intended clean-up campaign....¹⁵⁸⁶The coup that hovered had finally happened.¹⁵⁸⁷

In Parliament, armed soldiers entered the chamber and ordered the Senate which was in session to be dissolved just as members were about to pass a motion declaring the coup illegal.¹⁵⁸⁸ A parliamentary official reported that soldiers passed a note to the President of the Senate in mid-debate demanding that proceedings be shut down immediately, forcing a member who was speaking, to be interrupted in mid-sentence as everyone was ordered out.¹⁵⁸⁹ The female Secretary General to Parliament was physically dragged out by armed soldiers.¹⁵⁹⁰ For the third time in Fiji’s history, gun-wielding Fijian soldiers had abused their license to carry arms in their line of duty, and showed disrespect to the highest democratic institution, by storming Parliament while in session and ordering members out. The soldiers no longer had any fear or respect for the rule of law, the constitution, chiefs or politicians. They were now a law unto themselves, with guns making the decisions.

The following day December 6, Mr Qarase left Suva for the peace and security of his home island of Vanuabalavu, where he remained in “exile” over the next few months under the orders of the military that no plane or vessel should carry him Suva.¹⁵⁹¹ The order was obviously made out of the fear that indigenous SDL supporters would mobilise against the

¹⁵⁸⁶ Fraenkel, 2007: p. 421

¹⁵⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 426

¹⁵⁸⁸ Malcolm Brown and AAP. Dec 6, 2006. ‘Troops dissolve Parliament,’ The Sydney Morning Herald, in <http://www.smh.com.au/news/world/fiji-emergency-declared/2006/12/06/1165080979613.html?page=2>

¹⁵⁸⁹ Malcolm Brown and AAP. Dec 6, 2006. ‘Troops dissolve Parliament,’ The Sydney Morning Herald, in <http://www.smh.com.au/news/world/fiji-emergency-declared/2006/12/06/1165080979613.html?page=2>

¹⁵⁹⁰ Footage available in <http://fijishamelist.blogspot.co.nz/2007/04/fiji-coup-2006-name-and-shame-list.html>

¹⁵⁹¹ Fraenkel, 2009: p. 52

military regime. Qarase's absence away in the islands and the aggressive gun-wielding tactics of the soldiers, were enough to keep dissident Fijians underground.

Regime's response to critics and dissenters

This section investigates the various manifestations of gender-based violence perpetrated by the military against opponents and critics of the 2006 coup and the post-coup military regime. This includes those who did not fit the military's perception of a 'good' and therefore 'compliant' citizen.

As the military regime extended its tentacles (testicles) of control over the nation following the 2006 military coup, it unleashed a reign of terror based on physical violence, torture and psychological coercion, to intimidate opponents.¹⁵⁹² A key question that arose during this period of violent suppression was, "How could soldiers who serve as peacekeepers on UN peacekeeping missions abroad, perpetrate such violence and brutality?"

To address this question, there is a need to understand the "crisis in masculinity" that arises from the inconsistency between 'militarised masculinities' participating in peacekeeping operations, and the evidence of these through threats made to Fijian institutions, civil society, lawyers and civil servants, and how these threats were carried out. The nature of intimidation successfully splintered many critics and dissenters, even if not all of them. To further complicate the situation, many of the wives and families of soldiers accepted military violence as their personal burden. This has contributed to the hyper-masculinisation of 'entitled' military men which allows them to get away with their violence.

The next section offers a glimpse into the impact of peacekeeping in Fiji from a feminist intersectionality analysis.

¹⁵⁹² Ratuva, 2007: p. 32

Peacekeeping versus Militarized Masculinity: A Crisis in Masculinity?¹⁵⁹³

Feminist scholars such as Enloe (2000)¹⁵⁹⁴ and Whitworth (2004)¹⁵⁹⁵ contend that the 'masculinity' of many soldier changes throughout their training process, creating an identity of "militarized masculinity" which is a combination of traits and attitudes that are hyper-masculine, hegemonic, and associated primarily with military soldiers.¹⁵⁹⁶

Whitworth notes in particular that peacekeeping provides a unique case for examining 'militarized masculinity.'¹⁵⁹⁷ Since the UN relies on soldiers for peacekeeping, a contradiction occurs when peacekeeping demands that soldiers "deny" many of the traits that define what it means to be a soldier.¹⁵⁹⁸ The training and message a soldier receives about appropriate 'masculine soldierly' behaviour are at odds with what is expected in a peace operation.¹⁵⁹⁹ The image of the peacekeeper as caring, gentle, benevolent, compassionate, sensitive and kind, and resisting the use of weapons unless a last resort, is contrary to prevailing dominant notions where a soldier trained for combat is expected to project aggression, violence and obedience to orders and discipline, among others.¹⁶⁰⁰

Whitworth thus contends that the paradox between a benevolent peacekeeper and an aggressive soldier turns peacekeeping to some extent, into "a crisis of masculinity" which takes a number of forms, and exists at a number of levels. At the peace operation level, the crisis results in the display of hyper-masculinity and violence, including sexual and physical violence, at the national discourse level, the image of the kind gentle soldier is no longer sustainable and begins to get frayed, revealing a mismatch between deploying people who are trained to kill, on missions dubbed 'peace operations.'¹⁶⁰¹

This discrepancy between the myths and promises associated with 'militarized masculinity' on the one hand, and the actual conditions of militarized men's lives on the other, can be so enormous that some of these men resort to violence against family members in order

¹⁵⁹³ Lopes, Hayley. 2011. Militarized Masculinity in Peacekeeping Operations: An Obstacle to Gender Mainstreaming. *Peacebuilding*, p. 2

¹⁵⁹⁴ Enloe, C. 2000. *Maneuvers: The international politics of militarizing women's lives*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

¹⁵⁹⁵ Whitworth, Sandra. 2004. *Men, Militarism, and UN Peacekeeping: A Gendered Analysis*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

¹⁵⁹⁶ See Lopes, 2011: pp. 2-3

¹⁵⁹⁷ Whitworth, 2004: p. 16

¹⁵⁹⁸ Whitworth, p. 3

¹⁵⁹⁹ *ibid*

¹⁶⁰⁰ *ibid*

¹⁶⁰¹ Whitworth, p. 166

to re-establish or restore the equilibrium of their militarized masculine credentials.¹⁶⁰² As Whitworth argues, in their attempt to fix an identity that cannot be fixed, these men must be involved in a constant denigration and violence directed at those who undermine the privileges and entitlements of unfulfilled promises on which militarized masculinity rests.¹⁶⁰³ Based on this argument, this thesis contends that the cycle of coups and the consequent militarized violence in Fiji, is a manifestation of this ‘crisis of masculinity.’

Initially the length of peacekeeping duty tour was six months, but this extended to a mandatory 12 month-period as the demand for more peacekeepers put pressure on the Fiji military.¹⁶⁰⁴ Land Force Commander Tikoitoga explains that,

To have 1,200 soldiers overseas, you need to have in Fiji roughly three to four times more than the amount. So that when you bring one back, he can come and stay for four years, after everybody has made their rounds then he can go back. But with the current numbers that we have, you bring one back, and you have to send the guy back in roughly 12 to 18 months because we just don’t have the numbers.¹⁶⁰⁵

Such a demand has brought about more challenges for military families, including marital problems and social impacts on the children such as unruliness, indiscipline, drug addiction and truancy among others, due to the long absence of their fathers on peacekeeping tours. The pressure on the women themselves as they take on greater responsibilities as female-headed households, have also taken a toll on their health, with many women suffering from hypertension, trauma, nervous breakdown, etc.¹⁶⁰⁶ It also underscores the fact that peacekeeping has contributed to Fijian children growing up in a ‘fatherless society,’¹⁶⁰⁷ with the absence of a male role model or ‘father’ figure. The experience of early peacekeepers in Lebanon had seen numerous cases of marital problems and family breakdown as couples were not trained or counselled on how to manage and to cope with long absences. The wife of a former military officer believes that peacekeeping has contributed to many family break-up and divorces, and it would be interesting if a study

¹⁶⁰²Whitworth, p. 166

¹⁶⁰³ *ibid*

¹⁶⁰⁴ Fiji Peacekeeping Veterans Association submission to Constitution Review Commission (CRC), 13 Oct. 2012;

¹⁶⁰⁵ Roland Koroi. FBC news, 10/7/2013. Cabinet approves military recruitment drives, in <http://www.fbc.com.fj/fiji/11865/cabinet-approves-military-recruitment-drives>

¹⁶⁰⁶ Fiji Peacekeeping Veterans Association, 13/10/2012;

¹⁶⁰⁷ Personal communication by a senior civil servant; Suva, 2013;

was done on the actual impact on military families since the early days with UNIFIL in Lebanon.¹⁶⁰⁸

There is no doubt that women and family members left behind on the home-front are indirectly sustaining the global peacekeeping missions and ultimately the war machinery that creates them. This supports Tickner's (2005) claim "that the security of the state is often built on the insecurity of its most vulnerable populations and their unequal relationships with others."¹⁶⁰⁹ While Fijian men are deployed on peacekeeping missions to ensure the security of other states and citizens on the other side of the world, the state of Fiji has depended on women to bear the extra burdens and responsibilities of sustaining their families and communities and ultimately, the global peacekeeping system and the war machinery responsible for deployment missions in the first place.

A number of female interviewees have acknowledged the high incidence of violence among families of returned peacekeepers,¹⁶¹⁰ in which the 'crisis of masculinity' is also affected by the lesser-known impact of "post-traumatic stress disorder" (PTSD) of having served in post-conflict zones.¹⁶¹¹ An interviewee and wife of a former peacekeeper and mother of a current peacekeeper, shares the impact on her children when their father would be away on peacekeeping mission abroad for up to twelve months. For the children, their father was just an authoritative figure who comes and goes in their lives when they were small, so they have little recollection of him.¹⁶¹² She states:

He (husband) displays his army experience and authoritative-disciplinary style, so the children lived in fear of him, especially the oldest boy who was always on the receiving end of his father's violent behaviour- being punched, kicked and threatened. He (son) is now a teacher, but I'm worried how much of that violence he carries with him, and how the cycle of violence will continue if he doesn't get help to deal with it. As a wife and mother, I just have to accept

¹⁶⁰⁸ Fijian female, late 50s, former civil servant, University graduate

¹⁶⁰⁹ Tickner, J. Ann. (2005) What is your Research Program? Some feminist answers to International Relations Methodological Questions. *International Studies Quarterly*, 49, (pp 1-21) p. 11

¹⁶¹⁰ Talanoa session with two Fijian females, aged 58 and 60 yrs, wives of former soldiers/peacekeepers, 26/12/2014;

¹⁶¹¹ Waddell, Marshele. 2007. The war at home. *Today's Christian Woman (TCW)*, in <http://www.todayschristianwoman.com/articles/2007/march/11.50.html?start=2>

¹⁶¹² Fijian female interviewee, 60 yrs, wife of former soldier/peacekeeper, and mother of current soldier;

that it is part of my husband's 'discipline' service and ask the children to understand that he is coming from a violent situation and they should accept it.¹⁶¹³

She admits the lack of supportive services and network to help military wives cope with the violence and authoritative attitude, as she was working full time and could not meet up with other wives to find out if they were facing the same problems.¹⁶¹⁴ Even if they were,

no one brought it up because we silently accepted it as something that was part of our role as wives, to be supportive and accept whatever our husbands went through.¹⁶¹⁵

Another interviewee shared that in a workshop she had attended with military officers half of whom were women soldiers, a female officer had admitted that when her husband returns from peacekeeping and gets drunk, he assaults her.¹⁶¹⁶ But the female soldier did not attribute the violence to her husband being in a conflict zone or a bad temper.¹⁶¹⁷ The interviewee describes that:

She failed to figure out the connection that he only seemed to hit her when he returned from peacekeeping. She doesn't see anything wrong with that and quite a lot of the women don't see the connection there. I find it interesting that many of the women soldiers were saying how they see themselves as equal, having the same opportunities with men, but didn't feel safe enough to say the same things they were saying in separate group sessions, in the bigger group with male soldiers.

Recognising the social problems and issues faced by the families of peacekeepers, the Fiji Peacekeeping Veterans association had recommended the need for a full-time civilian professional family counsellor or welfare officer to be based in the military, to deal with marital and family issues that arise as a result of the long absence of the husband and father figure on peacekeeping missions abroad.¹⁶¹⁸

¹⁶¹³ Fijian female interviewee, 60 yrs, wife of former soldier/peacekeeper, and mother of current soldier, retired civil servant;

¹⁶¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁶¹⁵ Fijian female interviewee, 60 yrs, wife of former soldier/peacekeeper, and mother of current soldier;

¹⁶¹⁶ Fijian female interviewee, NGO worker, aged 40 yrs;

¹⁶¹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁶¹⁸ Fiji Peacekeeping Veterans Association, 13/10/2012;

As long as women 'in' the military (soldiers) or 'of' the military (as wives, mothers, girlfriends, daughters, etc.) and Fijian society as a whole accept that military violence is a burden that women have to bear, they fall into the trap of excusing the men's violent behaviour and reinforcing the cultural attitude of avoiding being held accountable for their violence. The cycle of violence among military families will continue if it is not acknowledged or addressed. Furthermore, critical issues such as Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) will continue to remain invisible and untreated, because of the 'masculine' attitude that acknowledging it would be a sign of "weakness," rather than strength. Women as military wives, will continue to bear the burden of violence, if left untreated or ignored.

This research underlines the gendered ideology at the heart of peacekeeping, which promotes "masculinity" as the basis of its foreign policy, based on the assumption by our patriarchal leaders that women would automatically step up on their gender role of 'caretaker' to fill the void left by the men when they are deployed to 'trouble spots' around the world. The thesis notes the heavy responsibility that military wives and female relatives have shouldered first, by bearing the burden of militarised violence in the homes, and secondly, but indirectly sustaining the global peacekeeping missions, and ultimately the war machinery that creates and sustains it."¹⁶¹⁹

The 'crisis of masculinity' arising from peacekeeping, and manifested through various forms of militarized and hegemonic masculinity, provides a background to the perplexing question posed earlier, as to why Fijian soldiers who serve as UN peacekeepers abroad, return home to become involved in the cycle of coups that has held to Fiji's development and democratisation to ransom over the past thirty years.

It also provides a background to our understanding of the violence discussed in the rest of this chapter.

¹⁶¹⁹ Tickner, J. Ann. 2005. What is your research program? Some feminist answers to International Relations Methodological Questions. *International Studies Quarterly*, 49: p.11;

Victims and Casualties: A Revenge coup?

When Prime Minister Qarase was re-elected for a second term in May 2006 on the vote of 80 percent of indigenous Fijians,¹⁶²⁰ he could neither save himself nor his multi-party government from the coup d'état of the predominantly Fijian military six months later.¹⁶²¹ Brij Lal (2009) notes that a major deviation of the 2006 coup occurred when a Fijian army confronted a Fijian government, fuelling the indigenous community's worst fears about a "Fijian army spilling Fijian blood on Fijian soil."¹⁶²²

Ruth First's analysis of army intervention in Africa questions, 'who is dispossessed by a coup' and 'who is raised to power?'¹⁶²³ This line of questioning is relevant for this section and the rest of this chapter, as it traces those who are victimised by the coup, and those who have benefited from the patronage relationships engendered by the coup. These questions are particularly relevant in post-2006 coup Fiji, since the extent of a 'vengeance' coup' can be gauged by the scale of violence and victimisation inflicted by a 'wronged' party against those they feel have wronged them. In this case the military considers itself as the 'wronged' party, by acting on behalf of all who feel they have been 'wronged' in Fiji.¹⁶²⁴ Furthermore, as Ogueri observes, it is those who are unhappy and dissatisfied who would be most willing to make the supreme sacrifice to 'save the nation and its people,'¹⁶²⁵ or to rally behind those willing to do so. To understand the 'supreme sacrifice' of Bainimarama and his men in the 2006 coup, we need to bear in mind his goal of eliminating the Fijian nationalist forces that he claimed to have backed the army mutiny of November 2000, in which his life was threatened.¹⁶²⁶ Only then can we make sense of the real motives of this coup.

Bainimarama began by eliminating a section of Fijian middle classes by purging the civil service and statutory bodies of SDL appointees, alleging corruption, mismanagement or

¹⁶²⁰ Ramesh, 2007: p. 136

¹⁶²¹ Squires, Nick. Dec. 6, 2006. Fiji's business-as-usual-coup d'état. The Christian Science Monitor, in <https://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1206/p07s02-woap.html>;

¹⁶²² Lal, Brij. 2009. 'Anxiety, uncertainty and fear in our land': Fiji's road to military coup, in Fraenkel, J., Firth, S. and Lal, B. (eds). The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: A Coup to End All Coups? Canberra: ANU-E Press; Ch. 2, p. 21; This phrase is related to Ratu Sukuna's war cry, "Eda na sega ni kilai nai Taukei kevaka e sega ni dave e liu na noda dra:" Fijians will not be known unless their blood is split first.

¹⁶²³ First, 1970: p.16

¹⁶²⁴ This comment was also shared by a Fijian female interviewee, early 50s with a legal professional background;

¹⁶²⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶²⁶ Firth et.al., 2009: p.125

abuse of office by these officials.¹⁶²⁷ Former Vice President Ratu Madraiwiwi stated that Bainimarama has “gutted the Fijian middle classes,” the ranks from which Fijian leaders are expected to be drawn.¹⁶²⁸

While the coup had been justified by claims of military knowledge of deep-seated corruption by the Qarase government, the military had relied on ‘sources’ or ‘informers’ such as the Fijian military reservists and Indo-Fijian informers in government departments and statutory bodies.¹⁶²⁹ Without hard evidence, corruption remained as allegations under an ‘accusatory’ climate of ‘fear, rumour-mongering, hearsay, lies and gossip,’ generated by the coup.¹⁶³⁰

Victimisation of Great Council of Chiefs (GCC)

The coup was implemented through a brutal campaign against pro-indigenous elements who were perceived to have little tolerance for the ideals of multi-racialism, equal citizenry and genuine democracy that was embraced as objectives of the coup.¹⁶³¹ The commander openly vilified and publicly ridiculed both the GCC and the Methodist church, which are integral parts of the Fijian establishment, which the predominantly Fijian military has also been part of.¹⁶³² Military spokesmen exploited the media such as Radio Fiji One to mount daily attacks and accusations against ethnic Fijian opponents in the Fijian language, which were not repeated on the station’s English language programmes.¹⁶³³

Tension soon arose between Bainimarama and the GCC. Having usurped the position of President, Bainimarama forwarded his nominee for Vice President to the GCC as the appointing authority.¹⁶³⁴ He insisted that he would only attend the GCC meeting if he was invited as ‘President’ rather than ‘Commander.’¹⁶³⁵ When the GCC finally met in April 2007 to appoint a new Vice President, it refused to endorse Bainimarama’s recommendation,

¹⁶²⁷ Firth et.al., 2009: p.125

¹⁶²⁸ Joni Madraiwiwi. 2009. Mythic constitutionalism: Whither Fiji’s course in June 2007? In Fraenkel, Firth and Lal (eds). Ch. 23: p. 387

¹⁶²⁹ Fraenkel, 2007: p. 428

¹⁶³⁰ Fraenkel, 200: p. 437; see also Emde, S. 2005. Feared rumours and rumours of fear. *Oceania*, Vol.75 (4): pp 387-402;

¹⁶³¹ Fraenkel et.al., 2009: p.7

¹⁶³² Naidu, Vijay. 2009. Naidu, Vijay. 2009. Heading for the scrap heap of history? The consequences of the coup for the Fiji labour movement, in Firth, S., Fraenkel, J. and Brij Lal (eds)., Ch. 11, p. 238;

¹⁶³³ Naidu, 2009: p. 238;

¹⁶³⁴ *ibid*

¹⁶³⁵ Fraenkel, 2009: p. 52

since the nominee was already serving in the interim regime.¹⁶³⁶ Bainimarama suspended the GCC in retaliation.¹⁶³⁷ The Chairman of the GCC and *Tui Tavua* (chief of Tavua district), Ratu Ovini Bokini lamented that “never before had the GCC been so ridiculed and suppressed.”¹⁶³⁸ In April 2007, two truckloads of Fijian soldiers were sent to close the office of the GCC and ordered staff to go home, after coup leader Bainimarama suspended the council, calling it a “security threat.”¹⁶³⁹ A GCC member who was vocal against the military during their meeting two days before, confirmed that two truckloads of soldiers arrived at his home and took him to the barracks for questioning.¹⁶⁴⁰ It was a clear indication that the soldiers had no respect for any institution, let alone the Fijian chiefly establishment.

Other institutions that touched at the heart of the indigenous Fijian community such as the Native Land Trust Board (NLTB) and the Fiji Rugby Union, also came under the radar of the military regime.¹⁶⁴¹ Interestingly, these institutions manifested the same type of masculine dominance as the military. A female interviewee states for example that “the same kind of mentality in the military exists in rugby,” which is the national sport as manifested in the *cibi* (war dance) before a ‘*valataki vanua*’ (state warfare) in an international game.¹⁶⁴² In response to the lengths the military went to dismantle the structures at the heart of indigenous Fijian society, the interviewee states:

That was really clever, they went after every institution that the other coups didn’t really target, the Fiji Rugby Union, the Methodist church, the GCC...they tend to mix up (‘*bosoka vata*’) the military and the Fijian culture, in the sense of its association with a warrior culture, and they could not separate one from the other. They go after these Fijian institutions by stamping their masculine identity, saying, “we are superior, we are the ideal [masculine] identity and this is the way things should be and anyone that doesn’t represent, look or conform to this ideal are seen as ‘outsider.’ They adopt this kind of mentality

¹⁶³⁶ *ibid*

¹⁶³⁷ Leung, p. 296

¹⁶³⁸ Fraenkel, 2007: p. 431

¹⁶³⁹ Pareti, S. 2007. Fiji soldiers sent to close Council of Chiefs, ABC news, 17/4/2007; in <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2007-04-13/fiji-soldiers-sent-to-close-council-of-chiefs/2241626>

¹⁶⁴⁰ *ibid*

¹⁶⁴¹ Naidu, p.238

¹⁶⁴² Female interviewee, 40, ethnic Fijian leader of multi-cultural NGO; see also Teaiwa, 2005;

of “us against them” and this is what they impose upon other Fijian structures that they go after.¹⁶⁴³

Consider for instance the GCC or ‘*Bose Levu Vakaturaga*’ (BLV), a colonial construction by the first colonial governor Sir Arthur Gordon in 1876, which was built upon a loose and informal structure of an existing assembly of chiefs, whom Gordon consulted on how Fijians should be governed.¹⁶⁴⁴ The GCC came to embody the privileged relationship of trust and protection between the Fijians and the British when the leading chiefs ceded Fiji to the Crown in 1874.¹⁶⁴⁵ Over the years, the GCC has continued to be an exclusive forum of high-ranking hereditary chiefs, of which the most influential members were the paramount chiefs of south-eastern Viti Levu [Bau, Rewa] and the eastern islands [Lau, Cakaudrove].¹⁶⁴⁶

The 1997 constitution provides for the GCC to appoint the President, Vice President, and 14 members of the Senate, one from each of the 14 provinces, with its primary function as advisory body to make recommendations to the President for the benefit of the Fijian people, according to the Fijian Affairs Act.¹⁶⁴⁷

Prior to the 2006 coup, the GCC was made up of 54 members, comprising 3 members each of the 14 provincial councils, four ex-officio members including the President, Vice President, the Prime Minister and the Minister for Fijian Affairs, who has the privilege of nominating an additional six chiefs, and the Council of Rotuma with two members. A patriarchal institution, GCC membership have predominantly been men who dominate the provincial councils and traditional chiefly titles. The few women members of the GCC, are among the holders of even higher chiefly titles than men, where provinces like Rewa and Nadroga have allowed both male and female chiefs to inherit titles. This includes the title of Roko Tui Dreketi (paramount chiefly title for Rewa province) which is currently held by Ro Teimumu Kepa, former Leader of the Opposition, who also holds the highest-ranking title in the Burebasaga confederacy, which traditionally covers the provinces of Rewa, Nadroga, Ba, Serua, Namosi and Kadavu.¹⁶⁴⁸ Chiefly women from Kubuna or Tovata

¹⁶⁴³ Female interviewee, *ibid*;

¹⁶⁴⁴ Norton, R. 2009. The changing role of the Great Council of Chiefs, in Fraenkel, J., Firth, S. and Lal, B. V. The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: A coup to end all coups? Canberra: ANU Press: p.98;

¹⁶⁴⁵ Norton, 2009: p. 98

¹⁶⁴⁶ *ibid* p. 99

¹⁶⁴⁷ Ralogaivau, F. 27/04/2007. *The Bose Levu Vakaturaga: A Primer on Fiji's Great Council of Chiefs*. In Fiji Times 27/4/2007; also Pacific Islands Report, <http://www.pireport.org/articles/2007/04/27/primer-fiji's-great-council-chiefs>

¹⁶⁴⁸ Lawson, S. and E. 2015. Chiefly Leadership in Fiji: Past, Present and Future. SSGM Discussion paper 2015/5, ANU Press: p. 2

confederacies have neither held nor inherited chiefly titles even where their fathers were title holders.¹⁶⁴⁹

In February 2008, new regulations were gazetted for the GCC, affecting its autonomy and membership that would exclude many former members including several high-ranking chiefs.¹⁶⁵⁰ The Minister for Fijian Affairs now known as Indigenous Affairs, holds the status of chairman, with greater power than before.¹⁶⁵¹ The new rules aim to fulfil the army commander's mission to rid the GCC of the political influence of Fijian nationalist groups.¹⁶⁵² A controversial requirement in the new decree is that all members must be formally installed chiefs, which can be problematic seeing that almost 60 per cent of chiefly titles remained vacant, and subject to disputes by rival title claimants.¹⁶⁵³ Since the 2014 elections and the success of the Fiji First party, Bainimarama has held the portfolio of Minister for Indigenous Affairs to oversee the progress of a future GCC.

In a reverse role of patronage, Bainimarama as interim prime minister, had to rely on the loyal support of two chiefs to approve the decrees that formally suspended and eventually abolished the GCC.¹⁶⁵⁴ The two are direct descendants of the chiefs that ruled Fiji and provided patronage to the military since cession but particularly after independence. Their actions confirm the argument advanced in this thesis that despite the justification of the early coups to restore power to the chiefs, the coups actually became symptoms of the decline and demise of the Fijian chiefly system and Fijian administration. Each coup has put a nail into the decline and final demise of the once proud institution of power and influence among indigenous people in Fiji.

¹⁶⁴⁹ There are few exceptions where women have held district chiefly titles in Bua or Macuata provinces, but not paramount titles over the whole province.

¹⁶⁵⁰ Norton, 2009: p. 112

¹⁶⁵¹ *ibid*

¹⁶⁵² *ibid*

¹⁶⁵³ Norton, 2009: p. 112

¹⁶⁵⁴ Scoop, 14/3/2012. Bainimarama's speech on 'De-establishing the Great Council of Chiefs, in <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO1203/S00245/bainimarama-on-de-establishing-great-council-of-chiefs.htm>

National Identity: What is “Fijian” about you? ¹⁶⁵⁵

Perhaps the biggest insult that Bainimarama inflicted on indigenous Fijians was to dispossess them of their original identity as ‘Fijian’ and imposing it as a national identity for all citizens of Fiji, while ethnic Fijians were referred to as ‘*Taukei*.’ ¹⁶⁵⁶ Since colonial days the term ‘Fijian’ has referred to the indigenous inhabitants of Fiji, for example Ratu Cakobau was referred to in the Deed of Cession in 1874 as a ‘Fijian’ chief. ¹⁶⁵⁷

National leaders at Independence had left the issue of a common name open but distinguished between ‘Fijian’ and ‘Indian’ in the 1970 constitution. The definition of Fijian or Indian in the 1970 constitution was seen as discriminatory towards women, since it emphasized paternal links only to define a Fijian or Indian, rather than links to either of the parents.

In the analysis of the ‘*taukei-vulagi*’ concept in Chapter 6, the indigenous conception of national identity is tied to the ‘*vanua*’, which means that one is “*taukei*” only where one derives his or her roots to the land, otherwise one remains a ‘*vulagi*’ (stranger, outsider) elsewhere. Any attempt therefore towards a ‘national identity’ can be regarded as pretentious since being “Fijian” is a ‘*vanua*’ based identity. As Teaiwa aptly observes, “the problem with Fijian nationalism is that there is no Fijian nation...there are Fijian provinces, and traditional Fijian confederacies.” ¹⁶⁵⁸

Hence, Bainimarama’s attempt to decree the name ‘Fijian’ for all citizens was another of his “*vadi ca*” (evil intention) in his vengeance coup to dispossess indigenous Fijians of what they value.

¹⁶⁵⁵ This caption is taken from an article by Monisha Das Gupta. 1997. ‘What is Indian about you? A gendered, transnational approach to Ethnicity.’ *Gender and Society*, Vol. 11 (5): pp 572-596; I believe a similar article, which is beyond the scope of this thesis at this time, could be written on the perspectives of indigenous and non-indigenous Fijians of what the name, ‘Fijian’ means or entails for them?

¹⁶⁵⁶ Republic of Fiji Islands Constitution, 2013. Preamble, p. 1

¹⁶⁵⁷ Derrick, R.A. *A History of Fiji*. Suva: Government Press, Vol. 1: Appendix I.

¹⁶⁵⁸ Teaiwa, T. 2008. An analysis of the current political crisis, in Lal, Brij with Pretes, M. *Coup: Reflections on the Political Crisis in Fiji*, Ch.5. Canberra: ANU Press; p.31;

Former Prime Minister Qarase had expressed opposition to the name change:

This is a highly sensitive proposal to the indigenous population. Ever since the word 'Fijian' was first used it referred to the indigenous population. It is part of their psyche and part of them. Any change must have the approval of the Fijian people after very wide consultation with them.¹⁶⁵⁹

Observers could also see through the scheming of Indo-Fijian members and supporters of Bainimarama's regime who still bore grudges of 'victimhood' from the previous coups of 1987 and 2000,¹⁶⁶⁰ and had jumped on Bainimarama's bandwagon under the guise of "good governance as a "pay back" for indigenous coup supporters."¹⁶⁶¹ Many among this group felt as 'second class' citizens when indigenous peoples are referred to as 'Fijians.' But they were now happy to disregard the previous association of the term 'Fijian' with "*jungali*" (bushman) Fijians,¹⁶⁶² so long as ethno-nationalism, a perpetual source of their insecurity, is banished to the dustbin of history and replaced by civic nationalism, multi-ethnicity and multi-culturalism.¹⁶⁶³ Being referred to as 'Fijian' would finally put them on an equal footing with indigenous Fijians as they would no longer be the "other," thus confirming what Ratu Sukuna had said in 1946 that the "Indian wants equality..he wants us to be equal... he is continuously on the lookout for racial discrimination."¹⁶⁶⁴

Indigenous rights activists referred to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP 2007) to express concern over the failure of the regime to seek the "free, prior and informed consent" (FPIC) of indigenous peoples or their representatives, for any changes that may affect them.¹⁶⁶⁵ A central element of "free, prior and informed consent" is genuine inclusion and respect for indigenous peoples' decision-making processes,"¹⁶⁶⁶ which the Bainimarama regime had clearly failed to honour. Many indigenous women believe that the lack of courtesy for indigenous people affects not only

¹⁶⁵⁹ Fiji Times, 16 August 2008; cited in Baledrokadroka, 2010.

¹⁶⁶⁰ Fraenkel, 2009:

¹⁶⁶¹ Views shared by a Fijian male in mid-40s, former senior civil servant, University graduate;

¹⁶⁶² Ratuva, S. 2007. The paradox of Multiculturalism: Ethnopolitical Conflict in Fiji, in Brown, M. Security and Development in the Pacific Islands: Social Resilience in Emerging State. USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers Ltd; Ch. 10: p.211

¹⁶⁶³ Jone Baledrokadroka. 2010.

Opinion piece, Taukei and the new 'Fijian,' available on internet 18/08/2010;

¹⁶⁶⁴ Scarr, 1982: p.402:

¹⁶⁶⁵ Article 19, UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Adopted by 61st session of General Assembly, 13/09/2007; in

http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf

¹⁶⁶⁶ Grand Chief Edward John (TI'azt'en) from Canada, in Portalewska, 2012.

the legitimacy of the national identity, but its long-term sustainability.¹⁶⁶⁷ Baledrokadroka also argues that, “an involuntary name change, especially [one] involving a whole race, risks permanent generational and emotional resentment by such a race for what is basically, identity theft.”¹⁶⁶⁸

In its submission to the CRC, the FWRM noted some merits in the proposal for a common name but disapproved of the manner in which the regime imposed the name ‘Fijian’ without consulting indigenous Fijians. A significant proportion of indigenous peoples have mixed feelings about the issue and have a proprietorial attitude about the term from history and long association, hence feelings of resentment could mar future relations.¹⁶⁶⁹

A Fijian male professional had criticised the regime for its lack of understanding of the terms by confusing ‘indigenous’ rights with ‘citizenship’ rights.¹⁶⁷⁰ Addressing non-indigenous people in Fiji, he writes:

you are not Fijians and will never be. Be proud of your ethnicity, it's your heritage and you can't conveniently change it. Why do you want to be Fijian when you are not? You are a minority in Fiji and either a migrant or the descendent of a migrant. Why should we [indigenous people] change our ethnic name for your convenience? ¹⁶⁷¹

He assured that he was not being racist but being truthful and honest.”¹⁶⁷² He makes the distinction between ‘indigeneity’ or indigenous rights based on claims of first settlement,¹⁶⁷³ and ‘nationality’ based on citizenship rights, which many non-indigenous people in Fiji still tend to be confused about, since they view nationality and citizenship rights as the basis for equal rights while ignoring ‘indigeneity’ and the rights of indigenous peoples as the first peoples of the land.

An interviewee had distinguished between the use of the common name in Fiji and overseas:

¹⁶⁶⁷ In ‘Talanoa’ session with Fijian women during 2012-2014;

¹⁶⁶⁸ Baledrokadroka, 2010.

¹⁶⁶⁹ FWRM submission to CRC, October 2012;

¹⁶⁷⁰ Comments by a Fijian male, mid 40s, former senior civil servant;

¹⁶⁷¹ Fijian male, mid 40s, former senior civil servant;

¹⁶⁷² *ibid*

¹⁶⁷³ See for example, O’Sullivan, Dominic. 2014. Indigeneity, Ethnicity and the State: Australia, Fiji and New Zealand. *Journal of Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol.20 (1): The politics of Indigenous Identity: National and Global Perspectives;

When you say 'Fijian' they will ask, what 'Indo-Fijian' or 'indigenous' Fijian'? They are still qualifying it. I think it's going to take a lot of rebranding for it to change. You will find the only ones who identify with the term 'Fijian' are those who live outside of this country. I can understand that but the people who live here, the Indians and any other race that lives here, they call themselves Fiji Chinese, Fiji Indian, Fiji this, Fiji that! No one calls themselves Fijians except for the Fijians.¹⁶⁷⁴

This is affirmed by a European woman in her submission to the CRC:

"[A]s a European I cannot find it within myself to claim to be "Fijian" let alone "i Taukei" which I most certainly am not. If I talk to strangers how can I call myself a Fijian - they would look at me strangely indeed, but if I said I was a Fiji Islander, meaning I belong to the islands of Fiji, it is acceptable by all."¹⁶⁷⁵

She preferred to be known as 'Fiji Islander' the common name already prescribed in the 1997 constitution, rather than feel like a fraud as a "Fijian."¹⁶⁷⁶ Former Prime Minister Qarase had also reminded the regime that 'Fiji Islander' was already a common name, but that it had not been promoted and marketed both locally and abroad.¹⁶⁷⁷ He said, "if the common name 'Solomon Islander' or 'Cook Islander' can stick, there is no reason why 'Fiji Islander' cannot."¹⁶⁷⁸

I argue that a section of the Indo-Fijian community and other ethnicities are averse to the term 'Islander' (which could label them as 'racist') because it conjures up an image of island paradise with 'care-free, fun-loving, exotic natives',¹⁶⁷⁹ as depicted in tourist brochures and in the colonial stereotyping and romanticism of the 'noble savage' in the early Pacific travel accounts of Melville and Bougainville.¹⁶⁸⁰ Such an image is contradictory to the 'serious,

¹⁶⁷⁴ Fijian female interviewee, 40, 10/12/2012;

¹⁶⁷⁵ European woman submission to CRC, 11/10/2012

¹⁶⁷⁶ *ibid*

¹⁶⁷⁷ Cited in Baledrokadroka, 2010;

¹⁶⁷⁸ *ibid*

¹⁶⁷⁹ A female NGO colleague had shared that she was convinced this was a reason why many Indo-Fijians did not like to be called "Fiji Islander" including a certain political leader who was selective of parts of the 1997 constitution that suited him and once said the constitution was racist;

¹⁶⁸⁰ See for example, Howe, K.R. 1977. The Fate of the 'Savage' in Pacific Historiography. Paper presented as J.C. Beaglehole Memorial Lecture to the New Zealand Historical Society Conference, Victoria University, Feb. 1977;

tedious, hardworking, and time-conscious settler-migrant,¹⁶⁸¹ hence the lack of popularity and marketability of Fiji “Islander,” as ruefully expressed by Mr Qarase.

While other commentators likened the identity theft as ‘ethnic cleansing’¹⁶⁸² an Indo-Fijian male appealed to members of his community that the security of Indo-Fijians can only come by working together with indigenous people.¹⁶⁸³ He recognises that the key to the security of inter-ethnic relations and sustainability of multi-cultural peace in Fiji lies in Indo-Fijians developing the sensitivity to genuinely cooperate and understand the indigenous Fijians, instead of working against their interests or competing against them, as has been the norm by Indo-Fijians since cession.

Threats to civil society in post-2006 coup

Following the 2006 coup, those who were openly critical of the military or soldiers and suspected or accused of committing crimes or misdemeanours were detained and tortured at the military camp.¹⁶⁸⁴ These included both men and women, among whom were women’s rights activists, pro-democracy advocates, SDL party members and officials, unionists and others.

The military then shifted its ‘clean-up’ campaign to the streets, by targeting marginalised and vulnerable groups such as sex workers, homeless people, bootleggers, marijuana dealers and sexual minorities, who were treated with harsher bullying tactics compared to other citizens.¹⁶⁸⁵ According to an interviewee who worked with these marginalised groups, the military and the police in particular, felt that they were also the ‘morality police’ on a certain level, so that anyone who did not fit into their perception of how gender ought to be, that is being a man or woman, would be beaten up.¹⁶⁸⁶ For example, by judging a person’s sexuality, they bashed a gay man and told him, “*iko dodonu mo tagane*” (“you should be a man”), or they would bash up a lesbian girl and threaten to turn her into a girl (“*iko mo yalewa.*”¹⁶⁸⁷ These vulnerable groups were forced to go underground during this

¹⁶⁸¹Female NGO colleague;

¹⁶⁸² Former Fijian politician, male in mid 50s

¹⁶⁸³ Indo-Fijian male commentator

¹⁶⁸⁴ Buadromo, Virisila. 2009. The impact of Fiji’s 2006 coup on human and women’s rights, in Firth, S., Fraenkel, J. and Lal, B.V. (eds). The 2006 Military Takeover: A coup to end all coups? Canberra: ANU E-Press, Ch.12: p. 405;

¹⁶⁸⁵ Ibid

¹⁶⁸⁶ Fijian female interviewee, 40s, NGO activist; 10/12/2012; Around the same time social media carried the story of a drunken policeman who was charged with the rape of his lesbian sister to teach her what it is like to have sex with a man.

¹⁶⁸⁷ Ibid

period to escape harassment from these 'hyper-masculine men' in the military and police force.¹⁶⁸⁸

Other protestors who took turns at the military barracks were either beaten up or forced to run around the parade square as the military consolidated its control over the citizens.¹⁶⁸⁹ With freedom of expression severely curtailed, many people were afraid to speak out openly against the regime, thus reinforcing a "culture of silence."¹⁶⁹⁰ Moreover, the name of the long reigning British Monarch Queen Elizabeth, after whom the military barracks is named, was greatly dishonoured as it became associated with the site of atrocities against civilians.¹⁶⁹¹

Whitworth's argument is relevant to our understanding of the behaviour of hyper-masculine men when she states that in order to 'dehumanize' the enemy, soldiers must first eliminate the "other" within themselves which occurs during basic military training, "through the denigration of everything marked by difference, whether that be women, people of colour, or homosexuality."¹⁶⁹² It is not a coincidence therefore as Whitworth contends, that the insults most new recruits face at training are either gendered, raced or homophobic insults, since young soldiers are learning to deny or obliterate the "other" within themselves.¹⁶⁹³

Deaths in custody: the '*buturaki*' culture (culture of beating)

In the days and weeks following the 2006 coup, instances of blatant thuggery and brutal violence by members of the security forces resulted in the deaths of a number of young

¹⁶⁸⁸ Fijian female interviewee, 40s, NGO activist, 10/12/2012;

¹⁶⁸⁹ Hunter, R. 2009. State Control and self-censorship in the media after the coup, in Firth, S., Fraenkel, J. and Brij Lal (eds). The 2006 Military Takeover: A coup to end all coups? Canberra: ANU E-Press, Ch. 14, p. 279;

¹⁶⁹⁰ Saine, p. 197; see also Narsey, W. 2014. "Far from free and fair: another victory for treason, lies, deceit, money and the culture of silence." 25/09/2014, in

<https://narseyonfiji.wordpress.com/2014/09/25/far-from-free-and-fair-another-victory-for-treason-lies-deceit-money-and-the-culture-of-silence-25-sep-2014/> ; Narsey, 2014. "The

hibernation of Fijian intellectuals." 23/01/2014; (post-script 28 Jan), in

<https://narseyonfiji.wordpress.com/2014/01/23/the-hibernation-of-fijian-intellectuals-22-january-2014-2/>; Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi. 19/3/2014. Beyond a culture of silence, on the courage to

speak out, in response to Narsey, 23/01/2014; in blogsite,

<http://www.fijiileaks.com/home/beyond-culture-of-silence-ratu-joni-madraiwiwi-on-courage-to-speak-out>

¹⁶⁹¹ Fraenkel, p. 434

¹⁶⁹² Whitworth, 2004: p. 172

¹⁶⁹³ Whitworth, 2004: p. 172

Fijian men while in custody.¹⁶⁹⁴ The Fijian term “*buturaki*” (noun) or *buturaka* (verb) refers to someone being badly beaten up by a mob. Like Leung, I respectfully cite the names of these young men so their deaths are not mere statistics or footnotes in history, but part of the living memory of a dark period in Fiji’s recent past. I mention their wives or parents because they are former classmates, church mates and childhood friends.¹⁶⁹⁵

On January 5 2007, 41-year old Fijian man Nimilote Verebasaga, from Nakaulevu village in Nakelo reportedly died six hours after being taken into military custody, from injuries sustained from beating at the hands of military officers.¹⁶⁹⁶ He left behind his wife Asinate and four children.¹⁶⁹⁷ Verebasaga’s younger brother who identified his body at the hospital, admitted that the injuries he witnessed “could not be the result of beatings inflicted by one man. It’s a group that beat him up. The family will not stop until we get justice.”¹⁶⁹⁸ A second brutal death was that of 19-year old Sakiusa Rabaka, who was severely beaten, sexually assaulted and forced to perform humiliating military exercises by a joint taskforce of military and police officers on January 24, 2007.¹⁶⁹⁹ He later died from the injuries he received at the Black Rock military base in Nadi, mourned by his parents Peni and Alanieta Rabaka.¹⁷⁰⁰ Eight soldiers, including three former members of Fiji’s rugby sevens squad and a police officer were charged with Rabaka’s manslaughter.¹⁷⁰¹ Despite police investigations, the military attempted to send the soldiers on peacekeeping mission overseas,¹⁷⁰² in what was an example of “*taqomaka na ca*” (protecting criminal activities). The men were already on a UN-chartered Air Egypt plane in Nadi bound for Iraq when Fiji’s DPP office moved quickly with a court injunction to stop the men, who were offloaded and charged with the fatal bashing of Rabaka.¹⁷⁰³ In early 2009, the officers were tried, convicted and sentenced to an average of four years in prison each.¹⁷⁰⁴ However, within a month of serving their sentences, the officers were all released by the Prison Commissioner under the Yellow

¹⁶⁹⁴ Leung, p. 295

¹⁶⁹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶⁹⁶ Amnesty International (AI) Report, 2016: Timeline

¹⁶⁹⁷ Leung, 2009: p. 295

¹⁶⁹⁸ Nasik Swami. *9 years On*, Fiji Times, 09/12/ 2016.

¹⁶⁹⁹ AI Report, 2016: Timeline.

¹⁷⁰⁰ *ibid*

¹⁷⁰¹ The Dominion Post, 30/10/2007. Fiji sevens players on fatal bashing charges, in Stuff: www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/archive/national-news/26335/Fiji-sevens-player

¹⁷⁰² AI Report, 2016. Timeline.

¹⁷⁰³ The Dominion Post, 30/10/2007. Fiji sevens players on fatal bashing charges, in Stuff: www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/archive/national-news/26335/Fiji-sevens-player

¹⁷⁰⁴ AI Report, 2016: Timeline.

Ribbon campaign.¹⁷⁰⁵ Rabaka's mother Alanieta pointed to the injustice of a justice system that allowed her son's killers to serve only a few weeks of their 6 to 8 years sentences, when they had taken his life.¹⁷⁰⁶ It was also shocking that the yellow ribbon campaign allowed for people sentenced for serious crimes like murder to be set free. It is also inconsistent with Bainimarama's accusations against the Qarase government for the early release of the chiefs and soldiers convicted of the 2000 coups.

A third brutality in custody occurred in June 2007, when 30-year old Tevita Malasebe was beaten to death by police at the Valelevu police station in Suva, after being taken away in handcuffs from his Nasinu home the night before.¹⁷⁰⁷ When his mother Anisa Koroibanuve checked at the police station an hour after the police took him from home for 'minor' offences, she was told that he had not arrived.¹⁷⁰⁸ The following day she was among family members who were told to go to the hospital where she saw his body in the mortuary, "badly bruised from the neck down."¹⁷⁰⁹ At Malasebe's funeral service at Nasinu near Suva, attended by FWCC Coordinator Shamima Ali in her capacity as Human Rights Commissioner, and two other women's rights activists including Buadromo, the officiating clergy appealed to the women to do their best to see that justice is done to those responsible for Malasebe's death.¹⁷¹⁰

The image of grieving mothers and wives was beamed onto the living room television, and in the newspapers, tearfully pleading for justice in the brutal deaths of their loved ones at the hands of the security forces. Leung states that the death of these men was an extension of the unresolved investigation into the brutal killing of CRW soldiers in the army mutiny of November 2000, which remains un-investigated and perpetrators not prosecuted.¹⁷¹¹

¹⁷⁰⁵ *ibid*

¹⁷⁰⁶ Repeka Nasiko. 2016. 'Fatal torture,' in Fiji Times online, 7/12/2016;

¹⁷⁰⁷ Sydney Morning Herald, April 23, 2008. Fiji policemen weep over jail terms, in <http://www.smh.com.au/world/fiji-policemen-weep-over-life-jail-terms-20080423-2824.html>

¹⁷⁰⁸ Sydney Morning Herald, April 23, 2008. Fiji policemen weep over jail terms, in <http://www.smh.com.au/world/fiji-policemen-weep-over-life-jail-terms-20080423-2824.html>

¹⁷⁰⁹ The Age, June 7 2007. Fears Fiji Police beat suspect to death, in <http://www.theage.com.au/news/World/Fears-Fiji-police-beat-suspect-to-death/2007/06/07/1181089202515.html>

¹⁷¹⁰ Radio Fiji, June 13 2007. Malasebe's funeral service held this morning, <http://www.radiofiji.com.fj/fullstory.php?id=895>

¹⁷¹¹ Leung, p. 302

The '*buturaki*' culture was acknowledged by none other than Fiji's prime minister Bainimarama at a regional workshop on the 'UN Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,' in Natadola, western Fiji in 2016 where he states:

We have long had a culture in Fiji of people resorting to violence; whether it is against women in the home, instilling discipline in our children or the police attempting to extract confessions from criminal suspects. The culture of what we call the *buturaki*- the beating- is deeply ingrained in parts of the Fijian psyche.¹⁷¹²

The prime minister did not mention that the '*buturaki*' culture was actually the '*modus operandi*' of his post-2006 regime, although he did acknowledge in the same speech that Fiji has one of the best laws against torture.¹⁷¹³ This raises a mind-boggling contradiction: what benefit is it for a country to have the 'best' laws when it is not practiced, or worse still, when those who are supposed to enforce the law are the very ones breaking it? What hope do ordinary citizens have or where could they turn for justice and redress, when 'blatant thuggery' and torture is committed by the military or police force, the very agency that should protect them?¹⁷¹⁴

A new report released in 2016 by Amnesty International titled, "Beating Justice: How Fiji's Security forces get away with torture," documents individual cases of victims, mostly men, who were tortured or killed by the security forces following the December 2006 coup.¹⁷¹⁵ It acknowledges that "under military dominance, an ingrained culture of torture has taken root among Fijian security forces,"¹⁷¹⁶ manifested through severe beatings, rape, and other sexual violence reportedly conducted by uniformed officers. Amnesty's Pacific researcher Kate Schuetze stated at the launch of the report in Suva that, "torture does not just humiliate the victim. It also debases the torturer by hollowing out their humanity." She

¹⁷¹² Fiji Sun, 2016. *Fiji has one of the best laws against torture: PM*; Opening Speech at the regional workshop on the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,' at Natadola, Fiji, 28/10/2016; cited in AI report, 2016: p. 4;

¹⁷¹³ *ibid*

¹⁷¹⁴ Leung, p. 302

¹⁷¹⁵ AI Report, 2016. *Beating Justice: How Fiji's security forces get away with Torture*. London: Amnesty International.

¹⁷¹⁶ Movono, 2016;

advised that, “if Fiji wants to preserve its reputation as a Pacific nation renowned for its natural beauty, it must end the ugly practices of its security officials.”¹⁷¹⁷

The report supports an argument in this thesis that a prevailing “culture of torture, thuggery, abuse and bullying”¹⁷¹⁸ among law enforcement and security agencies, results from a culturally-sanctioned, entitled and militarized form of masculinity that is present at all levels of Fijian society, but demonstrated mostly by men in uniform. The brutalizing of citizens in custody reflects how the patriarchal state machinery, as represented by the masculine security forces (police and the military), mirrors the battering husband in the home.¹⁷¹⁹ Furthermore, the increasing incidents of police beating aimed to “copycat” the military, by beating up (*buturaki*) young suspects is a means for the police to prove their ‘manhood (or masculinity)’ to the military, so they could like them and be accepted as co-collaborators in the prevailing culture of violence manifested by the coup.

Threat to lawyers

The December 2006 coup had important ramifications for Fiji’s judiciary, especially the extent to which senior members of the Bench and Bar appear to have been complicit before or since the coup.¹⁷²⁰ As Leung rightly points out,

“[I]n circumstances such as a coup, where the ordinary person looks to lawyers for leadership and guidance and finds instead ambivalence and dissembling, the implications, both immediate and long term, are serious.”¹⁷²¹

Leung points to the irony of those who overthrow the established legal order, whether in uniform or otherwise, who then feel the need to legitimize their actions in legal terms.¹⁷²²

He refers to Bainimarama’s first remarks after executing the coup in which he invoked the ‘doctrine of necessity,’ as a first indication that the military had been assisted by elements

¹⁷¹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁷¹⁸ Movono, L. Fiji Times 5/12/2016. ‘Fiji has a culture of torture,’ in <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=380962>

¹⁷¹⁹ Essof, Shereen. March 16, 2007. Open letter to Zimbabwean Feminists, in <http://www.anarkismo.net> =written in the aftermath of brutal attacks by the police against Opposition members under Zimbabwe’s dictatorship of President Robert Mugabe;

¹⁷²⁰ Leung, G. 2009. The Impact of the coup on Fiji’s Judiciary, in Fraenkel, J., S. Firth and Brij V. Lal (eds). The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: A coup to end all coups? Canberra: ANU E-Press, Ch.15: p. 291

¹⁷²¹ Leung, G. 2009. The Impact of the coup on Fiji’s Judiciary, in Fraenkel, J., S. Firth and Brij V. Lal (eds). The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: A coup to end all coups? Canberra: ANU E-Press, Ch.15: p. 291

¹⁷²² Leung, p. 291;

in the legal fraternity. He was particularly concerned with the extent of the Commander's familiarity with the principles relating to 'necessity,' even if misapplied as affirmed in the Fiji court of Appeal ruling in 2009.¹⁷²³

It has indeed been a matter of concern to NGOs and law-abiding citizens when coup makers are able to get around the constitution based on advice received from legal experts. In a workshop on 'Transitional Justice' organized by the FWRM in Nadi in 2007, a female participant had suggested the need to "name and shame" the law schools that train lawyers who end up giving legal advice to coup makers to justify their coups.¹⁷²⁴

Many law-abiding citizens were therefore shocked when the Fiji Human Rights Commission (FHRC) director Shaista Shameem produced a 32-page report justifying the coup.¹⁷²⁵ From Leung's assessment, the FHRC report bears a remarkable resemblance to Bainimarama's initial post-coup remarks, in which he set out at length the rationale and legal justification for the coup.¹⁷²⁶ Former Vice President Ratu Madraiwiwi, a former Fiji High Court Judge himself, was forthright when he states that,

it was the director of the FHRC who had issued an elaborate justification for the military's actions of 5 December 2006, one that has emboldened and sustained the military in its peculiar understanding of what adherence to the constitution means.¹⁷²⁷

Hence, the credibility and standing of the FHRC was seriously undermined by the compromised stance of its Director,¹⁷²⁸ who should have heeded the words of her sister and former High Court Judge Justice Nazhat Shameem on the wisdom of staying out of a political crisis and upholding the law:

What are those lessons? Firstly, to stay out of the fray in a political crisis. Secondly, to uphold the law as long as it is possible to do so. Thirdly, to avoid collaborating with those whose actions may become the subject of

¹⁷²³ Leung, p. 291;

¹⁷²⁴ Fijian female in mid-50s, NGO activist and graduate;

¹⁷²⁵ Leung, p. 292

¹⁷²⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷²⁷ Madraiwiwi, 2009: p. 386

¹⁷²⁸ Leung, p. 292

constitutional litigation. Fourthly, to resign only when it becomes impossible to continue in office without legitimising the usurpers.¹⁷²⁹

The folly of the Director's collaboration with the coup makers in 2006 was brought to light in the ruling by the Fiji Court of Appeal which declared Bainimarama's coup, the dissolution of Parliament and all subsequent appointments that followed, as "unlawful" acts under the Fiji constitution.¹⁷³⁰

Instead of taking steps to restore Fiji's legal status according to the court ruling,¹⁷³¹ President Iloilo abrogated the 1997 constitution in another stark example of "*taqomaka na ca*" (protecting evil) by choosing to shield the illegal Bainimarama regime and save their ego and hence 'masculinity,' plunging Fiji further into a legal abyss.

In contrast to the FHRC Director's collaboration with the coup-makers, leading feminist human rights lawyer Imrana Jalal was subjected to harassment and intimidation by the military for her public stand against the military take-over. False and fabricated charges in relation to a takeaway business in Suva were brought against her and her husband by the military regime-installed Fiji Independent Commission against Corruption (FICAC).¹⁷³² Jalal notes that while FICAC was set up to investigate and prosecute corruption, it was used instead to persecute persons not supportive of the military regime.¹⁷³³ She declares,

I categorically deny these charges and will mount a robust defence against them. I am a human rights lawyer with a long record of public opposition to all unlawful, undemocratic regimes and my stance against Fiji's 2006 military takeover is public knowledge.¹⁷³⁴

¹⁷²⁹ Nazhat Shameem. 2004. Paper presented at a meeting of the International Commission of Jurists, Queensland Branch, 21 July 2004, cited in Leung, 2009: p. 293;

¹⁷³⁰ Court of Appeal, Suva Fiji Islands. Civil Appeal No. ABU0077 of 2008, Appeal from High Court. Judgement delivered on 9 April 2009, in <http://www.fijitimes.com/extras/Qarase-vs-Bainimarama-Court-of-appeal-judgement.pdf>

¹⁷³¹ The President to appoint a caretaker Prime Minister to advise a dissolution of parliament, and issue writs for election of Members of Parliament (as per above court of appeal ruling, 9/4/2009).

¹⁷³² Statement by P. Imrana Jalal, 8/01/2010. Fiji: Grave threats and false charges against human rights lawyer: in Women Living Under Muslim Law Networkers/RNZI, <http://www.wluml.org/node/5839>;

¹⁷³³ *ibid*;

¹⁷³⁴ *Ibid*; The charge against Jalal is that the business was run without a license-not a corruption matter which is beyond FICAC's legal jurisdiction. Such prosecutions are normally begun by the Central Board of Health or the Suva City Council. The maximum fine is FJ\$20 (US\$10) for a penal code charge alleging a failure to obey a lawful order. No lawful (or unlawful) order has been

She claims that the charges were part of a deliberate attempt by the military regime to publicly humiliate and embarrass her following her published opposition to the military take-over.¹⁷³⁵ The charges against Jalal were permanently ‘stayed’¹⁷³⁶ by the Courts and withdrawn by the DPP to the relief of Jalal, but not before incurring an excess of FJ\$2m for the taxpayers of Fiji.¹⁷³⁷ In the interest of good governance, someone must be held accountable for such a heavy price to pay in a frivolous exercise of malice and victimization.

The harassment was enough to ‘push’ Jalal overseas, where she joined the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Manila, Philippines.¹⁷³⁸ In November 2017, the World Bank Group President announced the appointment of Jalal as a member of the Inspection Panel of the World Bank, and she took up her new role in Washington DC, U.S.A. in January 2018.¹⁷³⁹ Within four months, the World Bank Inspection panel unanimously elected Jalal as Panel Chairperson, which makes her a Vice-President of the World Bank Group.¹⁷⁴⁰

Fiji may have (temporarily) lost the outstanding and brilliant service of Ms Jalal, but the women of Fiji are particularly proud that Fiji’s loss is the world’s gain. Despite unwarranted harassment by the military regime in Fiji, Jalal’s quality and integrity was recognised by the world. It also demonstrates that standing up for the rule of law, justice and integrity, actually pays in the long run.

Jalal’s advancement was in contrast to that of (former) Land Force Commander Pita Driti who had warned citizens in early 2010 to remember ‘who’ was in control:

...there are only a few people who [we] could term as adversaries – but I would discourage them from doing anything and I would like to tell them to keep low

issued against Jalal or the business, which has been allowed by SCC to operate while they wait for the SCC to issue the license.

¹⁷³⁵ *ibid*

¹⁷³⁶ A stay of proceedings is the stoppage of an entire case or a specific proceeding within a case, see <https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/stay>

¹⁷³⁷ *ibid*

¹⁷³⁸ See,

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/programmes/datelinepacific/audio/201816179/push-to-ensure-pacific-women-benefit-from-aid>

¹⁷³⁹ Inspection Panel, World Bank, in

<http://ewebapps.worldbank.org/apps/ip/Lists/NewsFromThePanel/NewsFromThePanelDisp.aspx?ID=309&Source=/apps/ip/Pages/Home.aspx>

¹⁷⁴⁰ Vijay Narayan. 27/04/2018. ‘Imrana Jalal appointed as Chairperson of the World Bank Inspection Panel,’ Fiji village news in <http://fijivillage.com/news/Imrana-Jalal-appointed-as-Chairperson-of-the-World-Bank-Inspection-Panel-srk925>

and try to cooperate with us in trying to maintain peace otherwise they will be in for something really hard in terms of how we will treat them this year.¹⁷⁴¹

In a strange twist of events, '*karma*'¹⁷⁴² came early to Driti's victims of verbal and physical bashing, when he was charged and found guilty of inciting mutiny and sedition in 2013 and sentenced to five years' imprisonment.¹⁷⁴³ The Fijian version of 'karma' is the idiom, '*E sega ni ura me tei damu ga ni kua*' ('it's not prawn to turn red today') which means that, "in time, those who treat you unjustly would get their just reward." It also proves the old adage to, "treat others as you want them to treat you." Indeed, respect for the rule of law is still the best guarantee for protection.

Over time, many military officers and civilians who had willingly served the regime as 'enablers,' 'aiders and abettors' of the coup, were either sacked, terminated or fell out of favour with their military masters, their reputation tattered and torn.

As Cecil deMille observes of the principles in his monumental movie, *The Ten Commandments*, "It is impossible for us to break the law. We can only break ourselves against the law."¹⁷⁴⁴

Sense of entitlement by Fijian men in uniform

Many interviewees had also observed a 'sense of entitlement' among Fijian men in the security forces in the aftermath of the 2006 coup.¹⁷⁴⁵ An interviewee notes for example that,

Fijian men in uniform feel they have some kind of supernatural power, that they can boss everybody, and lord it over others. They seem to have become short fused, they think they own the world, they show off and bully, *sa sivia nodra dokadoka*" (they are full of arrogance).¹⁷⁴⁶

¹⁷⁴¹Statement by P. Imrana Jalal. 8/01/2010, in Women Living Under Muslim Law Networkers/RNZI, Fiji: Grave threats and false charges against human rights lawyer <http://www.wluml.org/node/5839>;

¹⁷⁴² A fitting definition of karma by <https://www.lonerwolf.com/> states: "No need for revenge, just sit back and wait, those who hurt you will eventually screw up themselves. If you are lucky, God will let you watch."

¹⁷⁴³ Radio New Zealand Pacific. 11 Dec. 2013. Five years jail for former Fiji land force commander Driti, in, <https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/230568/five-years-jail-for-former-fiji-land-force-commander-driti>

¹⁷⁴⁴ Covey, S. 1989. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. New York: Fireside, p. 33

¹⁷⁴⁵ Personal conversation with female indigenous community worker, in late 50s, 12/12/2012;

¹⁷⁴⁶ Female indigenous community worker, in late 50s, 12/12/2012;

Such acknowledgement of Fijian men's sense of entitlement is reflected in a submission by women's representatives to the Fiji Domestic Violence Law reform commission which states,

[t]hey lord over the women folk as if it is their right to bash a woman, rape their own wives and do all this violence, thinking they are lord and master of the house.¹⁷⁴⁷

This is further illustrated in an incident witnessed by an interviewee:

The other day we were coming back from lunch and a bus was coming around in front of that intersection (in a downtown Suva street) and there was a prison truck behind the bus. The [Indo-Fijian] bus driver was waiting for the traffic to clear because there was a lot of traffic at the intersection, but the Fijian truck driver kept tooting and tooting his horn. Eventually, he just drove past the bus and parked in front of the bus stop. You see, this is the kind of thing they do: the guy gets out of the truck, walks up to the bus and bashes the driver in front of everybody sitting there in the bus. And he's in full uniform.¹⁷⁴⁸

This sense of entitlement by men in the security forces, tend to increase during coup times, especially when they are in uniform and have access to weapons. In fact, David Morgan (1994) notes in a description of the traits associated with a militarized masculinity that,

the uniform absorbs individualities into a generalized and timeless masculinity while also connoting a control of emotion and a subordination to a larger rationality.¹⁷⁴⁹

In this sense, the uniform absorbs the personality of the officer, whether it is a soldier, police or a prison officer, so that he loses himself by 'dehumanising' the "other" who is not one of them. It is a pathetic excuse for a Fijian man who is allowed to get away with his violence and forceful behaviour and not man enough to admit and be held accountable for wrongdoing. Another example was related by a former

¹⁷⁴⁷ Cited in UNFPA Pacific Sub-regional office. 2008. *An Assessment of the state of Violence against Women (VAW) in Fiji*. Suva, Fiji: p.14;

¹⁷⁴⁸ Fijian female interviewee, 40s, NGO leader, 10/12/2012;

¹⁷⁴⁹ David Morgan. 1994. "Theatre of War: Combat, the Military and Masculinities," in Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman (eds). *Theorizing Masculinities*. London: Sage Publishers, p. 165; cited in Lopes, 2011: p. 3;

school teacher who lived on the school compound in a day school in Suva. She was awoken very early one morning by a military officer parent who wanted his child's school report.¹⁷⁵⁰ When she politely told him that the school office would open at 8.00 am and he could come back then, he threatened to have her sacked.¹⁷⁵¹ She was concerned that this type of behaviour could be normalised if people began to tolerate it and nothing was done to stop it.¹⁷⁵²

For Enloe (1993) the notion of entitlement to certain male privileges is associated with militarized masculinity,¹⁷⁵³ while Whitworth further affirms that when associated with militarised masculinity, such enhanced sense of entitlement may lead to violence.¹⁷⁵⁴ While both Whitworth and Enloe refer to the context of a male sense of entitlement towards sexual encounters with women, it is applied here in terms of the physical violence by the military against citizens to underscore the "hyperviolence" against non-military men, and the dehumanising of those who are considered "other" to militarised males.¹⁷⁵⁵

In the aftermath of the 2006 coup, there were numerous incidents where family members of military officers such as wives and children exploited the coup situation to exert some sense of self-importance. A young woman related how she and her friends were threatened by the wife of a military officer after a disagreement, who questioned them, "*Cava dou vinakata? Dou via lai cici wavoki na keba?*" ("What do you want? Do you want to go and run around the camp?").¹⁷⁵⁶ The threat was in reference to civilians being hauled up to the military camp and punished by being forced to run around the military camp and doing press ups. A case of neighbourhood bullying was shared by another interviewee:

When there's a fight among the kids in the neighbourhood, and if your father is a military officer, next thing you know an army truck arrives, takes the other kids up to the camp, bash them up and brings them back. That's what was happening, it's as if they have become a law unto themselves.¹⁷⁵⁷

¹⁷⁵⁰ Fijian female interviewee, 50s, former school teacher, 7/12/2012;

¹⁷⁵¹ *ibid*

¹⁷⁵² *ibid*

¹⁷⁵³ Enloe, Cynthia. 1993. The right to fight: a feminist catch 22. *Ms.* (July-August): p. 84; cited in Lopes, 2011: p. 4

¹⁷⁵⁴ Whitworth, p. 163

¹⁷⁵⁵ Lopes, 2011: p. 4

¹⁷⁵⁶ '*Talanoa*' session with 28-yr old Fijian female, University graduate, 02/12/2012;

¹⁷⁵⁷ Female Fijian interviewee, mid 50s, former school teacher and University graduate; also see Madraiwiwi, 2009: p.

A young man who recalled those days shared:

Young kids were scared to go to town because there were military people there, soldiers on the road, fully armed with guns. If we were playing touch rugby and a military truck or van passed by, someone would yell out “hey there’s a military truck” and everything would stop.¹⁷⁵⁸

A woman community leader stated in jest, that if she was ever taken up to the military camp, she would bare her “boobs and buttocks, stretch marks and all, for those military people to see.” When prodded why she would do that, she replied, “to remind them that I could be their mother, wife, sister, aunt, grandmother, all the female relatives they should respect.”¹⁷⁵⁹

Buadromo notes that typical abuses at the camp were based on opportunistic and unsubstantiated accusations, or ‘grudge’ complaints.¹⁷⁶⁰ During this time, ethnic Fijians really went overboard with rumour-mongering, petty gossip and hearsay, so that anyone who held any kind of grudge against another would report it to the military, which responded with unlawful detention and assaults.¹⁷⁶¹ Another interviewee asserts that this was a sad reflection of what was happening at the national level, where people abused their position or the institution they are part of because of their own feelings of insecurity.¹⁷⁶² This was affirmed by another interviewee who states:

I would say that most them (military) including the coup leader, have some kind of insecurity, the façade of being behind a gun and having all these people stand to your attention, give them a sense of self-importance and power. It’s a dangerous combination when you carry around some grudge and then you have excess baggage like little education, low self-esteem, and a sense of not belonging. So, when you get an opportunity to spill your baggage, you really go overboard.¹⁷⁶³

¹⁷⁵⁸ Radio NZ, 5/12/2016. ‘Memories from Fiji’s 2006 coup still clear ten years on,’ file:///G:/Coup%20articles2/Memories%20from%20Fiji's%202006%20coup%20still%20clear%20ten%20years%20on%20_%20Radio%20New%20Zealand%20News.html

¹⁷⁵⁹ Female Fijian NGO leader and community worker, 54 yrs; 2007;

¹⁷⁶⁰ Buadromo, 2009: p. 406

¹⁷⁶¹ *ibid*

¹⁷⁶² Wife of former military officer; interviewee in mid-50s, University graduate, 12/12/2012;

¹⁷⁶³ Female NGO leader, 40, 10/12/2012;

This is a very important statement which affirms that those who perpetrate violence against others, do so to cover-up for some sense of insecurity and low self-esteem. It follows then that if “non-violence is the way of life for courageous people,” as Dr King’s philosophy states, then “violence is the way of life for cowards.”

Incidents involving military family members placed the military under closer scrutiny. For example, in a ‘*talanoa*’ session with a group of women during a social function, the women began commenting on the privileges that families of military personnel enjoyed compared to the rest of society, such as having their own hospital and medical services, access to housing, and the increased budget every year to the military compared to other sectors. They concluded that too many privileges were extended to this ‘sub-culture’ of Fijian society that is clearly “unproductive,” since there are no enemies or wars to fight.¹⁷⁶⁴

A young woman, whose father had served in the military, revealed in her submission to the CRC that living at the camp and witnessing the abuse of the 2000 coup and army mutiny, gave her a close perspective of the very real impacts of the coups on military families as well.¹⁷⁶⁵ She observes that there have also been victims within the military community such as military personnel who had fallen out of favour and dismissed before or since the 2006 coup, and the CRW members whose families had suffered the trauma of their killing, and nothing had been done about it since the army mutiny in November 2000.¹⁷⁶⁶

Her views reflect the need to have a balanced perspective instead of essentialising or homogenising the military in totality. This avoids the risk of being blind to the trauma and suffering of individual members of the military at the hands of the military itself, such as the CRW members and dismissed officers.

Militarization of Civil Service: Orders from ‘Fourth’ floor

Many ‘grudge’ complaints were lodged against the ‘slow moving bureaucratic’ civil service whose mindset and work ethics needed to change overnight to accommodate the threats of instant dismissal upon orders from ‘Fourth’ floor, which was a common reference to the Prime Minister’s office (Bainimarama’s office) at Government buildings.¹⁷⁶⁷

¹⁷⁶⁴ Issues raised in a ‘Talanoa’ session with a group of women at a social function, 02/01/2015;

¹⁷⁶⁵ Fijian female, late 20s, submission to Constitution Review Commission, 15/10/2012;

¹⁷⁶⁶ Fijian female, late 20s, submission to Constitution Review Commission, 15/10/2012;

¹⁷⁶⁷ Fijian female, mid 40s, former civil servant; 26/12/2014

A former civil servant complained that government workers were innocent victims of the coup, since they were not party to the coup, yet forced to bear the economic costs such as facing three pay cuts in the first year of the 2006 coup, which greatly reduced their purchasing power.¹⁷⁶⁸ The lowering of the retirement age from 60 years during Qarase's government to 55 years by the Bainimarama regime, had a huge impact on those who still had mortgages or education costs for children to pay off, particularly when they had made loan commitments based on the retirement age of 60 years.¹⁷⁶⁹

The new retirement policy forced many families to search for alternatives which became a 'push factor' for many women to seek domestic care work overseas, leaving young children behind with relatives.¹⁷⁷⁰ Labour mobility became an option for Fiji's qualified personnel who were forced into early retirement, hence many professionals like teachers and nurses sought positions in other Pacific islands like the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Nauru or Palau. Former security personnel secured jobs in mining industries in Papua New Guinea or the Solomon Islands or as private security guards in Iraq and Afghanistan. Senior civil servants and professionals who were terminated by the military regime or had resigned in protest against the coup, took up appointments in other Pacific islands such as Nauru, and Solomon Islands or globally. For those with little option, the future was bleak with reports of sudden deaths of some male breadwinners due to the stress of being forced to retire with outstanding loans.¹⁷⁷¹

An interviewee was forced to resign due to "very stressful work conditions" as the military regime increasingly imposed a militarized culture into the civil service work environment. This impacted on the morale of government workers and greatly affected team work as staff no longer had the passion or commitment to work beyond 8.00am to 5.00pm.¹⁷⁷² Furthermore as she observes,

fear-mongering and gossip dominated the workplace culture. A cloud of suspicion and distrust hung over the government workplace, and people had to be careful what they said or who they said it to, as you never know a friend

¹⁷⁶⁸ ¹⁷⁶⁸ Fijian female, mid 40s, former civil servant; 26/12/2014

¹⁷⁶⁹ Fijian female, mid 40s, former civil servant; 26/12/2014 *ibid*

¹⁷⁷⁰ *ibid*

¹⁷⁷¹ Fijian female, mid 40s, former civil servant; 26/12/2014

¹⁷⁷² *ibid*

from an enemy. Any rumour or gossip about what you said against the regime could instantly cost you your job.¹⁷⁷³

There were sacking and termination happening “left, right and centre based on arbitrary decisions and hearsay and not performance-based.” The interviewee admitted that the frustration and stressful working conditions took its toll on workers’ mental and physical health, work relations and morale, so eventually she resigned.¹⁷⁷⁴ The far-reaching impacts of the 2006 coup on the civil service compared to previous coups was identified by another interviewee who states:

It’s very interesting that in the civil service, where you have a senior military officer, the first thing they do is rebranding, they all get one uniform, they don’t believe in individuality, they all have to conform, they all have to look the same, which is just an extension of the military service into the civil service.¹⁷⁷⁵

While the military regime imposed many policy changes to modernise the civil service, one important transformation was to change the work culture from a slow-moving bureaucratic work culture to one that was instantly responsive. This was easily imposed under a militarized civil service that was constantly under threat of instant dismissal on orders from “above.”¹⁷⁷⁶

The appointment of military officers into senior civil services immediately following the coup was an obvious attempt by the military to control and subdue civilians into a militarised culture, churning out “militarised” civil servants instead of ‘civilian’ civil servants. This shall be examined further in the next section.

II. POLITICAL PATRONAGE AND CLIENTELISM

Since the 2006 coup, the military has stamped itself as the “pre-eminent institutional vehicle of ethnic Fijian power.”¹⁷⁷⁷ With each successive coup, the power and influence of the chiefly class diminished while a new military elite emerged, having displaced the chiefs

¹⁷⁷³ *ibid*

¹⁷⁷⁴ Fijian female, mid 40s, former civil servant; 26/12/2014

¹⁷⁷⁵ Female interviewee, 40 years old, NGO leader and activist

¹⁷⁷⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷⁷⁷ Fiji National University. The Great Council of Chiefs. Week 3, Lecture 2, HIST 701, in <https://weblearn.fnu.ac.fj/mod/resource/view.php?id=231754>;

and ousted the politicians. The coup maker as the new patron, is ready to disperse the spoils of the coup to those willing to offer total and blind loyalty.

The 'patron-client' relationship that evolved between Bainimarama and senior military officers is encapsulated by Weber's conception of 'patrimonialism',¹⁷⁷⁸ which describes a system of personal rule in which the ruler dispenses offices and benefits to subordinates in return for loyalty, support and service.¹⁷⁷⁹ 'Clientelism' is a classification of the patrimonial state in which a personalised relationship between actors (that is, patrons and clients), or a set of actors commanding unequal wealth, status or influence, is based on unconditional loyalties.¹⁷⁸⁰ Under such relationships, state officers (patrons), distribute benefits to strategically placed individuals lower than themselves (clients) in return for support, service and loyalty, and to those higher than themselves (patrons), for the continuous protection of their positions and tenures.¹⁷⁸¹ This means that a patron at one level may be a client to a superior other, and the linkage can be at an individual or group level.¹⁷⁸²

Patronage and clientelism have become prominent features of the coups since 1987 but became more pronounced after the 2006 coup, as Bainimarama sought to legitimise his regime and consolidate his support base both within the military and outside with the wider community.

In this section, I investigate how 'political patronage,' a key element in military rule, was demonstrated in the way that senior military officers were rewarded with job promotions, job security and special privileges as the main beneficiaries and clients of the 2006 coup maker and patron Bainimarama. Utilising a gender analysis, I shall examine how the 'patron-client' relationship network between the Commander and his officers benefited senior military officers, and how it impacted women in these relationships.

Beneficiaries of the 2006 Coup: Payoffs, Promotions and Patronage

In contrast to those who were victimised by the 2006 coup, another group had greatly benefited and deemed the real winners in the 2006 coup. The question by First on 'who is

¹⁷⁷⁸ Ikpe, U. 2000. Patrimonialism and Military regimes in Nigeria. *African Journal of Political Science*, Vol 5 (1) p. 146;

¹⁷⁷⁹ Weber, M.1978. *Economy and Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press: p. 1031; cited in Ikpe, 2000: p. 147;

¹⁷⁸⁰ Weber, 1978: p. 1031; cited in Ikpe, 2000: p. 147

¹⁷⁸¹ *ibid*

¹⁷⁸² *ibid*

dispossessed in a coup' and 'who is raised to power,' is relevant.¹⁷⁸³ Investigating who benefits in a coup is important as coups present 'opportunities' for promotion and new and important jobs for beneficiaries.¹⁷⁸⁴ Bainimarama had seized power based on a paradoxical ideology that embraced the "good governance agenda."¹⁷⁸⁵ Collier argues however, that the very act of usurping power destroys any moral ground the usurper takes in defence or pretence of good governance.¹⁷⁸⁶

Bainimarama's 'good governance' agenda had originated out of the resentment of a sector of non-indigenous Fijians (mostly Indo-Fijians) who had taken umbrage over Qarase's affirmative action policies in favour of indigenous Fijians, as reflected in the words of FMF Chief of staff Mosese Tikoitoga:

by giving Fijians giveaways, giving them preferential treatment in all government policies...[in] scholarships, in the way they can get loans from the Fiji Development Bank, the only result had been to make elite Fijians richer. We are telling them to work harder and they will not get handouts. They have to sweat because the Bible tells they have to sweat first to get their food.¹⁷⁸⁷

If Tikoitoga had reflected on his words he would have realised that these words could very well apply to himself and all the military officers who have benefited from the Commander's patronage since the 2006 coup.¹⁷⁸⁸ Soon after seizing power, Bainimarama had consolidated his support-base by appointing a 28-member military council to advise his regime on "anything and everything" including the declaration of states of emergency.¹⁷⁸⁹ The coup leader accepted the role of interim prime minister while retaining the post of military commander, despite having initially disavowed a political role or benefits for himself or his officers.¹⁷⁹⁰ Military officers who were initially appointed to key positions in the civil service and security institutions included Iowane Naivalurua as Commissioner of Prisons, naval commander Naupoto as Director of Immigration, and Jim Koroi as Police Commissioner.¹⁷⁹¹ He also appointed two chiefs of staff including Esala

¹⁷⁸³ First, 1970: p.16

¹⁷⁸⁴ Finer, 1962: p.57

¹⁷⁸⁵ Firth and Fraenkel, 2009: p. 128

¹⁷⁸⁶ Collier, Paul. 2009. *Wars, Guns and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous places*. New York: Harper-Collins: p. 147;

¹⁷⁸⁷ Firth et.al., p. 128

¹⁷⁸⁸ Firth, et.al., p.128

¹⁷⁸⁹ *ibid*

¹⁷⁹⁰ Lal, 2009: pp 21-22

¹⁷⁹¹ Fraenkel, 2007: p. 428;

Teleni and Pita Driti to reduce the risk of disloyalty. Driti was initially Bainimarama's choice as Fiji's ambassador to Malaysia, which was rejected by Malaysia as a Commonwealth country after Fiji was suspended from the Commonwealth following the coup. Driti then became Land Force commander, while Teleni moved to Police Commissioner to ensure the FMF control over the police force.¹⁷⁹² Pio Tikoduadua was assigned permanent secretary to the Ministry for Justice, while other key military council members included Roko Ului Mara, Driti and Inia Seruiratu. By criticising so-called "elite Fijians," Tikoitoga failed to discern what had clearly become the replacement of one elite group of Fijians, as the military saw the politicians, with another, the military elites themselves, who have benefited from the patron-client relationship of loyalty and payoffs.

As more people levelled criticism at the increasing militarization of the civil service, Naupoto responded:

Military officers should be accommodated into nation-building, like me right now. I feel the military has been used too much like a tied watchdog with a tag "return to barracks" after the job...Military officers have proved they can come in and be assimilated into society and do well and you just have to look at senior military officers who have held posts to prove that. Military people are useful and it is my answer to killing the coup culture. If you keep using the military as a watchdog the chain might break and bite people.¹⁷⁹³

Naupoto had conveniently forgotten that 'reservists' as military officers were already serving in nation building throughout government ministries and state-owned enterprises. He also ignored the fact that the military chain was already broken in 1987 when the military intervened in the politics of Fiji for the first time, and had kept coming back for more since then.

In the coups of 1987, "which gave the army its first taste of influence on civilian elites,"¹⁷⁹⁴ Rabuka and his senior officers had undoubtedly demonstrated to the impressionable young officers, many in senior ranks by the 2006 coup, that they too can transform their lives from the barracks to the luxury of political excesses.¹⁷⁹⁵

¹⁷⁹² Firth, et.al., p.126;

¹⁷⁹³ Firth et.al., 2009: p. 129;

¹⁷⁹⁴ Decalo, 1976: p.216;

¹⁷⁹⁵ See Collier, 2009: p. 147

Pointing at the way the military was targeting and sacking indigenous Fijians in executive positions in government and statutory bodies, an interviewee had stated,

[It] seemed as if the military people had this attitude towards the CEOs they were sacking, "if you can have this [good life] ...why can't I? ...They don't realize that these CEOs have studied at university here and overseas and worked hard to get where they are. So, maybe these officers are feeling sterile in the military and need a taste of the perks of civilian life? And they seemed to have this weird idea that all those Fijians in high positions could only have gotten there by corruption."¹⁷⁹⁶

Another woman had referred to the scriptures to question the military's involvement in politics:

...a text in the Bible says that "soldiers should not get mixed up in civilian affairs,"¹⁷⁹⁷ otherwise the enemy will take over our country in a sudden attack or war. Luckily, we don't have any enemies, otherwise no one will protect us at sea or land since the navy and army are too busy meddling in politics.¹⁷⁹⁸

Furthermore, Naupoto's argument that the military's participation in civilian governance can help 'kill the coup culture,' would do the exact opposite. As First argues of the coups in Africa, which is also true for Fiji,

once the army breaks the first commandment of its training - that armies do not act against their own governments - the initial coup sets off a process...[as] army men are fond of saying, 'once assailed, it is never again intact.'¹⁷⁹⁹

Thus 'one coup leads to another,' which means that once a coup is successful, 'the risk for a further coup attempt is greatly enhanced.'¹⁸⁰⁰ Three years after Fiji's first coup, Saffu had stated that,

Fiji would be exceptional if the military, having successfully intervened in politics, were to refrain from further interventions in the future. The coups

¹⁷⁹⁶ Fijian female interviewee, professional and University graduate, mid 50s; December 10, 2012;

¹⁷⁹⁷ 2 Timothy 2: 4, New Living Translation;

¹⁷⁹⁸ Fijian female NGO activist, 60s, university graduate, December 12, 2012;

¹⁷⁹⁹ First, 1970: p.20

¹⁸⁰⁰ Collier, 2009: pp 146-7;

have necessarily politicized the military, effectively sowing seeds of further coups.¹⁸⁰¹

His words had come true in 2000 and 2006.

It has increasingly become obvious that the military has cultivated a sense of entitlement to intervene through the coups to “save the nation” or to act in the “national interest,” as we witnessed in Bainimarama’s “good governance” coup. As Finer states,

whether the military are sincere or not when making the claim, it is almost common for them to fall in love with the power that has come so easily, and to convert their ‘interim’ regime into full blooded rule by the army.”¹⁸⁰²

Bainimarama had initially declared that neither he nor his officers would benefit from a political role,¹⁸⁰³ yet it soon became obvious that they had fallen in love with the power and excess of political offices by converting their “interim regime” to a full political party to contest the 2014 election. As Finer notes:

the plea for ‘national interest’ is often hypocritical. It becomes more and more suspect as the interests of the military shift from the more general to the particular- from defence of a region to the defence of a class, from the defence of a class to the defence of the army as an institution, until it reaches its ultimate degradation in those cases- and there are very many- where officers intervene in order (even among other things) to improve their own personal careers.¹⁸⁰⁴

There is no doubt that military officers and their families, especially those closely aligned and ‘loyal’ to Bainimarama, have benefited greatly from the 2006 military coup. After all, having discovered and tasted the excesses of power and political office, Bainimarama and his officers would not so readily surrender the perks, seeing that their personal career and statuses have vastly improved. Finer asserts that an “examination of individual cases shows

¹⁸⁰¹ Yaw Saffu. 1990. Changing civil-military relations in Fiji. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 44 (2), p. 166

¹⁸⁰² Finer, S. 1962. *The Man on Horseback*: p. 37;

¹⁸⁰³ Lal, 2009: pp 21-22

¹⁸⁰⁴ Finer, pp. 39-40

that a powerful motive in military intervention would be the material interest of the individual officers.”¹⁸⁰⁵

According to Enloe, militarization requires a feminine version to uphold and affirm it, which is accomplished by the wives or partners of military officers who have to make the ultimate sacrifice of giving up their own career or job promotions in order to accommodate the demands of their husband’s changing roles.¹⁸⁰⁶ The wife of a former senior military officer who had to give up her teaching career confided that, “keeping my family together was more important than my personal career advancement.”¹⁸⁰⁷ She admits that she had to be strong for the children and to accept and support her husband’s role even if it meant placing his concerns ahead of the family’s needs, such as when the children needed their father at home.¹⁸⁰⁸ She accepts that military wives had taken on more than their fair share of the roles, but had to be strong to be able to cope with the different kinds of challenges their husbands faced.¹⁸⁰⁹ A former school teacher would no doubt have become the principal of her school, if she had not left to join her husband on a diplomatic posting overseas.¹⁸¹⁰

The economic benefits that families of senior military officers enjoy from global peacekeeping are vast. Their earning power is increased when their husbands serve on UN peacekeeping missions or are posted overseas, so they are able to purchase and own property and put their children to some of the best private schools in Fiji and overseas. They also have the means to travel overseas and expand their horizon.¹⁸¹¹ While the military is both hierarchical and rank-based, an interviewee acknowledges that a wife’s status tends to parallel her husband’s status in the military. She observes that there is a tendency by some military wives to assume that their husband’s promotion in rank also carries over to their own status, which can be abused or exploited for selfish ambitions.¹⁸¹²

The interviewee believes that a wife’s ability to influence her husband’s decision also depends on her education and religious principles so that a wife with a University education, and a professional career such as the civil service, with strong moral, Christian

¹⁸⁰⁵ *Finer*, p.

¹⁸⁰⁶ *Enloe*, 2014: p. 8;

¹⁸⁰⁷ Wife of former senior FMF officer in early 50s, former senior civil servant, USP graduate;

¹⁸⁰⁸ *ibid*

¹⁸⁰⁹ *ibid*

¹⁸¹⁰ *Fiji sun* online, 26/02/2011; In, <http://fijisun.com.fj/2011/02/26/>

¹⁸¹¹ Wife of former senior military officer and UN peacekeeper, early 50s, former civil servant;

¹⁸¹² *ibid*

values, can play a great influence on her husband's choices and decisions compared to someone who lacked these extra skills.¹⁸¹³ An example was when her husband was offered a position by the rebels in the 2000 coup, but she had questioned if he would be happy to live with the decision seeing the manner in which it was offered, illegally and based on taking power by force. This shows the important role a military wife plays in response to important decisions that affects her husband both within the military and at the national level, which also impacts how her husband deals with the important issues and choices he faces.¹⁸¹⁴ As the wife of a military officer, she acknowledges that she has always been concerned for his safety and security.

While militarization requires the subordination of feminine gender roles in order to advance the militarized forms of masculinity as promoted and sanctioned by the military, there are also expressions of agency by military wives in helping their husbands to make the right choices in their personal and national interest.

Militarization of Police Force since 2006 coup

Between the 2006 coup and the 2014 elections, two senior military officers were successively appointed as Police Commissioners by the Bainimarama-led regime. These were naval officer Esala Teleni who served from 2007 to 2010 before being posted to China as Fiji's ambassador, and Iovane Naivalurua who was transferred from Commissioner of Prisons to Police Commissioner in 2010.

Amnesty International's report notes that the credibility of the Fiji Police Force is greatly undermined and public confidence eroded, when Police Commissioners have been drawn from the senior ranks of the military since the coup. Such practice reinforces the blurring of roles between the police and the military,¹⁸¹⁵ resulting in a demoralized police force whose independence and autonomy become highly compromised and militarised.¹⁸¹⁶

The report further observes that where the military has played a lead role in civilian policing operations, it has led to an increase in human rights violations, with several cases of torture and other ill-treatment being meted out by a joint police and military task force.¹⁸¹⁷ This

¹⁸¹³ Wife of former senior military officer and UN peacekeeper, early 50s, former civil servant;

¹⁸¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁸¹⁵ AI report, 2016: p. 4

¹⁸¹⁶ Madraiwiwi, Joni. 2009. Mythic constitutionalism: Whither Fiji's course in June 2007? In Fraenkel, Firth and Lal (eds). *The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: a coup to end all coups?* Canberra: ANU E-Press: p. 385

¹⁸¹⁷ AI report, p. 27

taskforce normally operates outside of police command and accountability structures, which makes it difficult for the police to charge or discipline military officers who are involved in such abuses.¹⁸¹⁸ The report acknowledges that,

a country's police service plays a critical role in the administration of justice and in upholding and protecting people's rights. It is important that the public have faith in the police service and its ability to investigate all criminal complaints with due diligence, including complaints against officers of the security forces.¹⁸¹⁹

In the early days of the coup, a young woman shared that she was forced to seek help from the military to deal with her husband who had failed to provide financial support for their children.¹⁸²⁰ She happily recounted how things had improved at home after one of the soldiers warned her husband over the phone, that if they heard from his wife again he had better "watch out."¹⁸²¹ Leung alludes to another case where a private law firm had written to the military seeking assistance to enforce a court order.¹⁸²² According to Leung, the purported use of the military to enforce a court order, however well intentioned, was misguided and inappropriate since there are established procedures for enforcing court orders, and invoking the help of the army was not one of them.¹⁸²³ Furthermore, such incidents merely add to the erosion of the rule of law, and gives the military the wrong impression that they had a role to play in enforcing legal proceedings.¹⁸²⁴ By usurping the role of the police in enforcing court orders, the military re-entrenches the blurring lines between them and the police.¹⁸²⁵

In the lead-up to the first elections following eight years of repressive military rule, the military regime recruited a veteran South African police officer Ben Groenewald which aimed "to give a semblance of civility prior to the 2014 elections."¹⁸²⁶ This was a positive sign for Fiji as it attempts to rebuild a tattered democracy and implement a new

¹⁸¹⁸ AI Report, p. 27

¹⁸¹⁹ AI Report, p. 28

¹⁸²⁰ Personal conversation with Fijian female in her 30s, with 3 young children, early March 2007;

¹⁸²¹ Personal conversation with Fijian female in her 30s, with 3 young children, early March 2007;

¹⁸²² Leung, 2009: p. 305

¹⁸²³ *ibid*

¹⁸²⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 305-6

¹⁸²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 306

¹⁸²⁶ Jenny Hayward-Jones. 12 November 2015. The Interpreter published by Lowly Institute in <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/rebuild-fiji-democracy-project-set-back-threat-police-independence>

constitution, by having its police force led by an independent, experienced and neutral police officer,¹⁸²⁷ with no links to the military, tribal or inter-ethnic cleavages.

Scarcely eighteen months into the position, Groenewald resigned under controversial circumstances which the government cited as ‘personal reasons’, but when pressed by the media, Groenewald admitted that he was not happy with the way the Fiji military was interfering with policing.¹⁸²⁸ He complained that military interference in efforts to prosecute those involved in vicious assaults and other high profile cases played a big part in his decision to leave.¹⁸²⁹ In an interview with Radio New Zealand Groenewald stated, “I am a true-blooded police officer and I’m not satisfied with the way that they interfere in policing.”¹⁸³⁰ Groenewald complained that “the military was harbouring a suspect” in a vicious assault case. The suspect was a former bodyguard of Bainimarama and those obstructing the police were “perverting the course of justice.”¹⁸³¹ This was another example of *'taqomaka na ca'* (protection of wrong-doers) that became a common feature of Fijian masculinity that allows some Fijian men to evade taking accountability for the wrong committed.

Immediately following Groenewald’s departure, the Bainimarama military regime announced the appointment of another military officer, land force commander Sitiveni Qiliho as Police Commissioner.¹⁸³² The move was criticised by NFP President Tupou Draunidalo as another “case of nepotism and cronyism of the highest order. Meritocracy has been trashed in favour of jobs “for the boys.”¹⁸³³ Draunidalo expressed concern over the continuous militarization of the police force, which “shows that military rule remains supreme in the country and above civilian rule enforced by the police.”¹⁸³⁴ Hayward-Jones also points out that, “Fiji’s 2013 constitution and the 2009 State Services decree make clear

¹⁸²⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸²⁸ Dateline Pacific, Radio New Zealand. 11 November 2015. Groenewald says Fiji military hid torture accused from Police, in

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/programmes/datelinepacific/audio/201778195/fiji-police-chief-resigns-amid-apparent-standoff-with-military>

¹⁸²⁹ See Radio NZ, 19 Nov. 2015, in <http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/290108/former-fiji-police-chief-tells-his-side>

¹⁸³⁰ Dateline Pacific, Radio NZ, 11 Nov. 2015;

¹⁸³¹ Fiji One News, Nov. 11 2015; cited in Hon. Tupou Draunidalo, NFP Media Release, Nov. 12, 2015. ‘Militarization of The Police Force Cannot Be Tolerated;’

¹⁸³² Dateline Pacific, Radio NZ, 11 Nov. 2015;

¹⁸³³ Hon. Tupou Draunidalo. NFP Media Release, Nov. 12, 2015. Militarization of the Police Force cannot be tolerated

¹⁸³⁴ *ibid*

the separation of powers between the military and police,¹⁸³⁵ but the Prime Minister's decision to appoint another military officer as police commissioner blurs this distinction and undermines the military's commitment to its own constitution.¹⁸³⁶ It also indicates that the prime minister is happy for the military to be influencing the police.¹⁸³⁷

This thesis is concerned with the practice of militarising the Corrections service and the Police force following each coup, through the appointment of military officers to head these services. This has resulted in what I regard as the '*cinderellization*'¹⁸³⁸ of the police and corrections services, where these two branches of the security services are treated like the military's 'poor' half-brothers, which no doubt, affects the morale of career officers in both services.¹⁸³⁹ In a recent reshuffle of senior military officers, Brigadier-General Sitiveni Qiliho was confirmed as Police Commissioner, Rear Admiral Viliame Naupoto became Commander of the military following an unsuccessful bid for Parliament in the 2014 elections, while Bainimarama's brother in law Francis Kean, who was earlier convicted for manslaughter, was appointed Commissioner of Corrections.¹⁸⁴⁰ Such appointments reflect the military's sense of superiority against the other services, based on its large armoury against the two largely unarmed services, and their legitimate role to use these arms.

Despite the different security focus on the roles of the military and the police forces in the protection and safety of individual citizens and national security, the police force has unfortunately been subjected to bullying and mistreatment, particularly following a coup, as a 'poor step-brother' by the military, which affects not only the morale of individual officers, but also the autonomy and independence of the police force. This has in turn affected the ability of the police force to perform to its full potential to ensure individual and community safety and security.

¹⁸³⁵ Hayward-Jones: 2015 in 'The Interpreter' published by Lowly Institute:

<https://www.lowlyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/rebuild-fiji-democracy-project-set-back-threat-police-independence>

¹⁸³⁶ Hayward-Jones, 2015

¹⁸³⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸³⁸ This term is used in reference to the popular children's folk tale of Cinderella and her cruel half-sisters, with the Police and Corrections services taking on the 'Cinderella' image of abuse and poor treatment at the hands of the FMF.

¹⁸³⁹ Pacific Beat, 7 March 2016: 'Fiji opposition leader slams military appointments to key positions,' in <http://www.abc.net.au/news/programs/pacific-beat/2016-03-07/fiji-opposition-leader-slams-military-appointments/7227770>

¹⁸⁴⁰ *ibid*

Militarization of Civil Service and Diplomatic Corp

The police force is not the only institution that has been subjected to heavy militarization since the 2006 coup. As senior civil servants and diplomats with years of hands-on training, public service examinations, university degrees, and experience were terminated based on various allegations, they were replaced by military officers “just like a jigsaw puzzle.”¹⁸⁴¹ Qiliho’s confirmation in March 2015 as the third military officer in post-coup Fiji to become police commissioner and Naupoto’s appointment as military commander, were announced by the Constitutional Offices Commission headed by none other than their patron, prime minister Bainimarama.¹⁸⁴²

A highly questionable appointment was that of Bainimarama’s brother in law and former navy commander Francis Kean, who was convicted of manslaughter and jailed for 18 months in 2007.¹⁸⁴³ He served only three months on full pay,¹⁸⁴⁴ and was released through the ‘Yellow Ribbon’ campaign under Corrections Commissioner Naivalurua, who coincidentally, had introduced the campaign in 2007¹⁸⁴⁵ under the pretext of “giving offenders a second chance in life,” but was actually targeted at freeing particular individuals like Kean.¹⁸⁴⁶ In January 2009, Kean resumed the role of commander of the Fiji navy. In response to criticisms, military spokesman Leweni denied that it had to do with nepotism and stated that Kean was the “right person for the job.” He urged that Kean’s reemployment must not be politicised but be seen in the context of the abundance of talent that Kean possessed which can be utilised to benefit the military and our nation.”¹⁸⁴⁷ Even if one begins to question what “abundance of talents” makes Kean so indispensable to the military and the nation, one can only conclude that such preferential treatment for

¹⁸⁴¹ The Fijian phrase used by a female commentator was, “*sa vaka na caka i ba na ka qo*,” (like a “jigsaw puzzle”) in the way civil servants are terminated and replaced by military officers who have no idea of what civil service work and policy entail.

¹⁸⁴² Radio New Zealand, 4 March 2016. Qiliho appointed Fiji police commissioner, in <http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/298138/qiliho-appointed-fiji-police-commissioner>

¹⁸⁴³ Radio New Zealand, 26 October 2007, in <http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/173550/former-fiji-navy-commander-kean-jailed-for-18-months-for-manslaughter>

¹⁸⁴⁴ Michael Field. 18 Aug 2011. ‘Convicted killer takes top Fiji job’, in Stuff; <http://www.stuff.co.nz/world/south-pacific/5466745/Convicted-killer-takes-top-Fiji-job>

¹⁸⁴⁵ The Yellow Ribbon campaign was borrowed from the Singapore prison service but adapted to the Fiji context. It was introduced into Fiji corrections service in 2007 and launched in 2008, for further information see, <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=332824>

¹⁸⁴⁶ The Fiji Times, December 07, 2015. ‘Giving a second chance to inmates,’ in <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=332824>

¹⁸⁴⁷ Stuff. Jan. 31 2009. ‘Killer to command Fiji’s Navy again’ in <http://www.stuff.co.nz/world/800726/Killer-to-command-Fijis-Navy-again> ;

Kean could not have occurred if he was not the brother in law of the coup strongman Bainimarama, who as patron, dispenses of such offices and privileges to whoever he chooses.

Kean's re-instatement also contradicts one of Bainimarama's justifications for the overthrow of the Qarase government for releasing from jail those who were convicted for their role in the 2000 coup and for giving them jobs.¹⁸⁴⁸ Bainimarama had declared then that anyone convicted of a coup role would not be allowed to stand in the next democratic elections.¹⁸⁴⁹ If Bainimarama was genuinely concerned about people with convictions taking up government positions, then it was highly inconsistent of his regime to allow Kean, a convicted killer, to resume his post following his early release from jail.

The public could only wonder as the pendulum of changing fortunes 'see-sawed' for senior military officers between the security forces, diplomatic circles and the civil service, as 'payoffs' for loyalty to their patron, Bainimarama. It begs the question whether this is what the 'clean-up campaign' and the 'good governance' coup had entailed, or was the coup just a smokescreen for a "vaulting ambition" on the part of military officers, motivated by their own selfish interests?¹⁸⁵⁰ As Fraenkel and Firth pose,

was Bainimarama's objective – to create an uncorrupted and racially harmonious Fiji – a utopian project masking other motives? Or did he genuinely believe that only a fresh start, imposed from above, could set Fiji on a stronger economic, social and political footing for the future?¹⁸⁵¹

Only time would tell what the real motives were. However, Decalo's fitting description of Idi Amin's 1971 coup in Uganda could well apply to Fiji in the aftermath of the 2006 coup where,

ambitious... officers who almost overnight acquired rank, regimental command, and the taste of absolute power...were whetted for more power...[W]ithin the context of a fully developed praetorian military

¹⁸⁴⁸ *ibid*

¹⁸⁴⁹ Stuff. Jan. 31 2009. 'Killer to command Fiji's Navy again' in

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/world/800726/Killer-to-command-Fijis-Navy-again>

¹⁸⁵⁰ William Shakespeare. Macbeth, Act 1, Scene 7; in <https://www.enotes.com/shakespeare-quotes/vaulting-ambition>

¹⁸⁵¹ Fraenkel et.al., 2009: p. 8;

system...[officers] scramble for a larger share of the spoils of office – payoffs, promotions and patronage.¹⁸⁵²

Indeed, as military officers and civilian coup supporters have reaped the full benefits of the coups in Fiji, the words of Cynthia Enloe are relevant, that [militarized] “masculinity continues to be the currency for domination, [inclusion] and exclusion,”¹⁸⁵³ which in Fiji, comes in the form of a militarized, masculinised and ethnicised military.

III. CAPACITY FOR WOMEN’S AGENCY IN POST- 2006 COUP

The third and final section of this chapter highlights the strategies utilised by women and the women’s movement in response to “gender-based violence” being meted out by members of the military against women perceived to be resistant to the objectives of the “clean up” coup. The expressions of agency through the strategies of these women and the women’s movement in general, shall be analysed from the twin positions of ‘resistance and reform.’

Resistance-oriented agency

In the early days following the coup, women’s rights activists were among citizens being hauled up to the military camp where they were subjected to torture, physical assault and verbal violence, for their criticism and ‘perceived’ resistance to the regime.

FWRM director Virisila Buadromo recalled that FWRM had taken a confrontational stance which placed them in the military’s face most of the time. The military did not take this very well, resulting in the physical assault and psychological humiliation of her group on Christmas eve 2006.¹⁸⁵⁴ She notes that as a patriarchal society, where the government is tied to a military which is both patriarchal and hierarchical, the women’s movement, particularly a group of female agitators, can be considered inimical and a threat to the predominantly male military psyche.¹⁸⁵⁵ Being seen to openly agitate for women’s rights under these oppressive conditions can be interpreted as an attempt by women, as the ‘weaker sex,’ to dominate or take over men’s space.¹⁸⁵⁶

¹⁸⁵² Decalo, 1976: pp.216-7

¹⁸⁵³ Enloe, 2014: p. 8

¹⁸⁵⁴ ‘*Talanoa*’ session with Virisila Buadromo, Executive Director of FWRM, 10/12/2012, who had allowed the use of her name;

¹⁸⁵⁵ *ibid*;

¹⁸⁵⁶ Buadromo, 2014: p. 66;

A democracy shrine set up by an indigenous businesswoman outside her home near Suva, had a large banner with the words, “Yes to Democracy, No to Guns,” which was constantly raided by the military.¹⁸⁵⁷ On Christmas eve 2006, Buadromo was among a group of six people that included two other women and three men including her partner, who were hauled up and detained at the QEB and subjected to physical and verbal assaults for several hours.¹⁸⁵⁸ Buadromo asserts that women in general were being subjected to particular indignities such as being threatened with rape, because they were women.¹⁸⁵⁹ The detention and beating of activists generated an outpouring of international outcry, which forced the military to cut back on its harassment of activists.¹⁸⁶⁰

The three women including Buadromo all fit into an intersectional pattern: they were women (gender), indigenous (ethnicity), all from Lau province (cultural identity) and represented everything that a patriarchal and indigenous institution like the military cannot tolerate: they are all young, independent, urbanite, middle class, educated and outspoken Fijian women.¹⁸⁶¹ They are regarded as “*viavialevu*” (cheeky) for speaking out, and were targeted to keep their mouths shut, with a clear message to one of them: “*kemu maleka, rauti iko vinaka, gusu levu*” (“good luck, you deserve it, big mouth”).¹⁸⁶²

The display of hegemonic masculinity against them, represents an attitude in a patriarchal culture such as the indigenous Fijian, where victims of gender violence are blamed for the violence inflicted upon them. This means that the violence was their own fault, which they have brought upon themselves for daring to speak out and resisting the military. The perpetrators on the other hand, are excused and let off the hook. Three other prominent Fijian women were detained at the barracks including a high chief, a prominent business woman and a former CEO, two had “Adi” which are chiefly titles in Fijian society. Their detention was clearly intended to send a message that by targeting those in positions of influence, others would think “oh my if they can do it to them, then I’ve got no chance in hell.”¹⁸⁶³ It was meant to discourage others from speaking out or they would receive the same fate as these women.

¹⁸⁵⁷ Fraenkel, 2009: p.433

¹⁸⁵⁸ Buadromo, 2009: p. 405

¹⁸⁵⁹ Buadromo, p. 405;

¹⁸⁶⁰ Tara Chetty, in an Interview with AWID, May 4 2007;

¹⁸⁶¹ *ibid*

¹⁸⁶² *Ibid*; These Fijian words were actually said to one of the women by a relative in the military;

¹⁸⁶³ Female interviewee, 10/12/2012;

The section that follows discusses the “dehumanising” strategy and behaviour that “hyper-masculine” men in the military had used against those targeted for detention and torture at the military camp, from the perspective of women and how they had responded.

“Method in their Madness” or ‘Madness in their Method?’ ‘Psy-Ops to Dehumanise the ‘Other’

Whitworth points to the strong connections between military organizations and hegemonic representations of masculinity,¹⁸⁶⁴ which involves dehumanizing the “enemy” in order to become emotionally prepared to eliminate the opposition.¹⁸⁶⁵ Furthermore, Lopes (2011) contends that it is important to mention the “dehumanization” of the “other,” when talking about gender relations because masculinities and femininities are always constructed in relation to other cultural aspects that influence identity.¹⁸⁶⁶ Consequently, soldiers trained in military warfare are also trained in cultural and gendered insensitivity.¹⁸⁶⁷

Many women had keenly observed that the military was being strategic in the way it was targeting civilians who did not toe the line, which was confirmed by an interviewee who had attended a workshop that included military officers.¹⁸⁶⁸

She soon discovered from conversations with the officers that the military used the strategy of “Psy-ops,” shortened for “Psychological Operations,” to break down the resolve of opponents during the regime’s “reign of terror.”¹⁸⁶⁹ In simple terms, ‘psy-ops’ refer to “tactics intended to manipulate one’s opponents or enemies, such as the dissemination of propaganda or the use of psychological warfare.”¹⁸⁷⁰ In the US Department of Defence for example, “Psychological Operations” (psy-ops) are planned operations designed to convey selected information and indicators to targeted audiences, “to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning,” and ultimately their behaviour in order to induce or reinforce the attitudes or behavior that are favorable to the perpetrator’s objectives.¹⁸⁷¹

¹⁸⁶⁴ See Whitworth, p. 160; cited in Lopes, Hayley. 2011. Militarized Masculinity in Peacekeeping Operations: An Obstacle to Gender Mainstreaming, p. 3;

¹⁸⁶⁵ Whitworth, 2004: p. 172

¹⁸⁶⁶ Lopes, 2011: p. 4; see also Paul Higate and Marsha Henry. 2004. Engendering (In)security in Peace Support Operations. Security Dialogue, 35: p. 487;

¹⁸⁶⁷ Lopes, p. 4

¹⁸⁶⁸ Fijian female interviewee, 40s, NGO leader: 12/12/2012;

¹⁸⁶⁹ *ibid*;

¹⁸⁷⁰ See <https://www.google.co.nz/>;

¹⁸⁷¹ See http://www.military.com/ContentFiles/techtv_update_PSYOPS.htm

The 'psy-ops' inflicted by the military against opponents was aimed at dehumanizing them, and it was obvious that a lot of strategic thinking had gone into planning and executing it, according to an interviewee:

they didn't just randomly round up people and say, okay you beat up these guys. Their method is clearly calculated to achieve maximum impact, so obviously a lot of thinking has gone into it, there's some kind of "method in their madness." They have studied their targets, they know who you are so they are able to weaken your resolve...to defeat your enemy you have to 'know' them first, right? So, different people are responsible for rounding up certain groups, like you have this guy (current Police Commissioner) who was responsible for rounding up people like (a notable lawyer and a prominent academic).¹⁸⁷²

Thus 'Psy-Ops' was applied through various tactics aimed at intimidating opponents to keep their mouths shut.¹⁸⁷³ Jalal for instance recounted the following experience:

In December 2006 after my published opposition to the military take-over, I was threatened with rape, in graphic detail, via an anonymous call to my mobile. I was warned to shut my mouth or "they" would shut it for me. That call was traced to a phone booth outside the gates of the QEB, home of the military forces.¹⁸⁷⁴

The military strategically targeted opponents based on particular forms of "psy-ops." There was very clear gender dynamics in the victims' response to the "psy-ops" that the military officers inflicted upon their victims. While the men returned from the camp "sullen and silent"¹⁸⁷⁵ usually after a single visit,¹⁸⁷⁶ a female victim believes that women could use the same strategy back at the military:

We can use the same psy-ops techniques back at the military, to beat them at their own games. So that if they say something is red, we have to tell them

¹⁸⁷² Female interviewee, 40; NGO leader, 10/12/2012;

¹⁸⁷³ Fijian female interviewee, mid 40s; see also Madraiwiwi, 2009: p. 385

¹⁸⁷⁴ *ibid*

¹⁸⁷⁵ Leung, 2009: p. 297;

¹⁸⁷⁶ Fraenkel, 2009: p. 434;

it's orange, and if we get enough people saying it's orange, they won't have a choice but to say it's orange.¹⁸⁷⁷

This shows that even under oppressive conditions, women can assert their capacity for agency with by coming up with innovative strategies to cope with the adverse forms and impacts of militarisation, whether physical or psychological.

Change in strategy: towards a Non-Confrontational approach

Since the military's assault on Buadromo and others, FWRM had decided to be smarter and strategic, by looking at more effective ways of engaging with the military.¹⁸⁷⁸ Buadromo admits, "I think our relationship has changed in that way, though I don't think their relationship to us has changed."¹⁸⁷⁹ Some NGOs had preferred to remain hard-line and felt that FWRM had become "too soft" in its approach.¹⁸⁸⁰ But as Buadromo asserts however, FWRM had to think more practically in terms of the conflict in Fiji:

As FWRM members we asked ourselves how our own actions impacted on the conflict: are we helping to resolve the conflict, or make it worse? We realised that simply taking a position, without listening or speaking to other groups or the government, was not contributing to progress. Responding to this recognition required a U-turn, by reversing a strict policy of non-engagement with the government or civil society organisations aligned with it.¹⁸⁸¹

FWRM members realised that they were not only individuals, but part of an organisation in which members had to think not only of themselves but of family members as well, some of whom were in the military as well.¹⁸⁸² Such change towards a "gentler" approach by a strong feminist organisation like FWRM follows similar stance by the women's movement in previous post-coup era, especially between 1995 and 2002.¹⁸⁸³

¹⁸⁷⁷ The female interviewee suggests that women use the same psy-ops techniques back at the men in the military to beat them at their own games, "so that if they say something is red, we have to tell them it's orange, and if we get enough people saying it's orange, they won't have a choice but to say it's orange."

¹⁸⁷⁸ Personal conversation with Buadromo, 10/12/2012;

¹⁸⁷⁹ *ibid*

¹⁸⁸⁰ *ibid*

¹⁸⁸¹ Buadromo, V. 2014. Legitimacy and peace processes: from coercion to consent. *Accord*, Issue 25: p. 66;

¹⁸⁸² Personal conversation with Buadromo, 10/12/2012;

¹⁸⁸³ George, Nicole. 2012. A Gentler Political Engagement: 1995 – 2002, in *Situating Women: Gender Politics and Circumstance in Fiji*. Canberra: ANU E-Press, Ch. 5: pp 139-178;

George (2016) observes that women and gender advocates working to end gender-based violence during this period of Fiji's history, navigate a difficult path which requires them to adopt a cautious political stand:

[T]hey regularly decry the pernicious presence of this violence as a violation of women's internationally recognized right to physical security. Yet they do so in an environment constrained by state authoritarianism, militarism and communal division...Processes of 'human rights translation' have taken on a profound importance in these circumstances. Much of this work is framed by the idea that Fiji's women are the twin victims of violence *and* a culture that ordains this violence.¹⁸⁸⁴

Noting the close fit between this 'culture' of violence' and militarization, an interviewee states that,

the indigenous Fijian culture, to the extent that it is so patriarchal, gels in nicely with militarization, so much so that Indo-Fijians who join the military become so Fijian in the way they talk, dress, as if they have adopted this culture.¹⁸⁸⁵

Furthermore,

the military itself is like a sub-set, a mini-Fijian society, a backward one that is still kind of caught in up in a time warp or something, so that everything else has developed but they are still there...as if they haven't really kept up with the time.¹⁸⁸⁶

The parallels between the military as a masculine institution, and the Fijian social structure was previously discussed in Chapter 5, which recognises the coups as manifestations of culturally-sanctioned, hegemonic forms of militarised masculinity, which also parallels George's reference to women in Fiji as twin victims of violence *and* a culture that ordains this violence.¹⁸⁸⁷

¹⁸⁸⁴ George, Nicole. 2016. 'Lost in Translation: Gender Violence, Human Rights and Women's capabilities in Fiji,' in Biersack, A., M. Jolly and M. MacIntyre (eds). *Gender Violence and Human rights: Seeking Justice in Fiji, Papua New Guinea & Vanuatu*. Acton: ANU Press, Ch. 2: p. 81

¹⁸⁸⁵ Fijian female, NGO leader, 40 yrs, 10/12/2012;

¹⁸⁸⁶ *ibid*

¹⁸⁸⁷ George, Nicole. 2016. 'Lost in Translation: Gender Violence, Human Rights and Women's capabilities in Fiji,' in Biersack, A., M. Jolly and M. MacIntyre (eds). *Gender Violence and Human rights: Seeking Justice in Fiji, Papua New Guinea & Vanuatu*. Acton: ANU Press, Ch. 2: p. 81

After six years of military control, which marked a period of unprecedented violence and intense oppression, the women's movement welcomed with great relief the constitutional review process in 2012. Women considered this process as a legitimate space where they could negotiate and reclaim once again the principles that enshrine gender equality and human rights for all.¹⁸⁸⁸ The power of collective organizing was again recognised, strategically refined and harnessed despite the challenges.¹⁸⁸⁹ The next section examines women's agency for reform as they claim their space in the democratic process.

Reform-oriented Agency: Women's Forum and Democratisation process

Women's organizations recognised a window of opportunity for change when the Constitution Review Commission (CRC) was announced by the regime, to be led by Kenyan constitutional expert Professor Yash Ghai (thus known as the 'Ghai Commission').¹⁸⁹⁰ For the women's movement and civil society in general, the legitimacy of the constitutional process lay in its ability to be independent and representative, hence having two external members and three women in the five-member CRC was a positive indicator.¹⁸⁹¹ It was also important for the women's movement that submissions to the Commission was made through a process that was free, fair and non-coercive.¹⁸⁹² Thus, as more people became involved and took ownership, the process progressively gained legitimacy and space opened up for debate without interference from the security forces.¹⁸⁹³

A historic moment in Fiji's history and the history of the women's movement occurred on 12 April 2012, when the inaugural national Women's Forum (short for 'Fiji Consultation on Women's Participation in National Democratic Processes'), brought women together from diverse backgrounds and intersectional voices representing women with disabilities and

¹⁸⁸⁸ Essof, Shereen. 2005. "She-murenga: Challenges, Opportunities and Setbacks of the Women's Movement in Zimbabwe," in http://agi.ac.za/sites/agi.ac.za/files/fa_4_feature_article_2.pdf

¹⁸⁸⁹ *ibid*

¹⁸⁹⁰ The Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) comprised 5 members, 3 locals (Taufa Vakatale, Peni Moore, and Dr Satendra Nandan; and 2 from overseas (Dr Yash Ghai and Dr Christina Murray); 3 women are Taufa Vakatale, Peni Moore, and Christina Murray.

¹⁸⁹¹ Buadromo, V. 2014. Fiji-the Constitutional Process: a view from FWRM: Legitimacy and peace process: from coercion to consent. *Accord*, Issue 25: p. 67; in <http://www.c-r.org/accord/legitimacy-and-peace-processes/fiji-constitutional-process-view-fiji-women-s-rights-movement>

¹⁸⁹² Buadromo, V. 2014. Fiji-the Constitutional Process: a view from FWRM: Legitimacy and peace process: from coercion to consent. *Accord*, Issue 25: p. 67; in <http://www.c-r.org/accord/legitimacy-and-peace-processes/fiji-constitutional-process-view-fiji-women-s-rights-movement>

¹⁸⁹³ *ibid*

living with HIV, as well as different faiths, cultures, sexualities, gender identities, ages, demographics and opinions.¹⁸⁹⁴ The Women's Forum became a national consultation mechanism to discuss and advance the participation of women in the national democratic processes.¹⁸⁹⁵ It acknowledges that women's meaningful and inclusive engagement in all national processes is essential to a rights-centred development and to the gender-inclusive participation of women as full citizens.¹⁸⁹⁶

Women actively participated in response to the constitution-making process announced by the interim Prime Minister on 9 March 2012, , and the Fiji national elections scheduled for September 2014.¹⁸⁹⁷ As feminists, human rights activists, peace-builders and democracy advocates, women were determined to make their voices heard and called on the State to value and respect their rights in accordance with the fundamental principles of 'good governance' on which Women's Forum platform was based which includes, participation, transparency, accountability, respect for human rights and respect for the rule of law .¹⁸⁹⁸

The four co-Convenors of the Women's Forum are the Fiji National Council of Women (FNCW), *Soqosoqo Vakamarama-i Taukei* (SSVM), Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) and FemLink Pacific. They believe that 'peace, human security and sustainable development' are possible when women in all their diversities are equal partners within civil society and with government and international organizations.¹⁸⁹⁹ The co-convenors received funding to mobilize their members in the lead-up to the Fiji national elections in September 2014, through civic education programs aimed at increasing women's participation in the constitution-making process and national leadership through the elections.¹⁹⁰⁰ Three consultations were conducted in Suva in 2012, the first from April 10 to 12th, the second on June 5 and 6, and the third between 3rd and 4th December 2012.¹⁹⁰¹

¹⁸⁹⁴ Women's Forum First Outcomes Statement, 10-12 April 2012, Suva, Fiji: p.1, available in, <http://www.fwrn.org.fj/programmes/fiji-womens-forum>

¹⁸⁹⁵ Women's Forum First Outcomes Statement, 10-12 April 2012, Suva, Fiji: p.1, available in, <http://www.fwrn.org.fj/programmes/fiji-womens-forum>

¹⁸⁹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁸⁹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸⁹⁸ Usman, Shazia. Sept 4, 2012. Flyover Feminism, Fiji Women's Forum, in <http://flyoverfeminism.com/fiji-womens-forum/>

¹⁸⁹⁹ The Fiji Women's Forum in <http://www.fwrn.org.fj/programmes/fiji-womens-forum>

¹⁹⁰⁰ The Fiji Women's Forum in <http://www.fwrn.org.fj/programmes/fiji-womens-forum>

¹⁹⁰¹ Usman, 2012: p.1/2

Women's Forum Outcomes

The first Women's Forum in April 2012 identified four priority issues to guide future consultations and engagements with the military regime. These include: the respect for human rights, defining the role of the security forces, promotion of women's participation in decision-making and democratisation process, and a rights-based, respectful, open and participatory constitution making process. The Women's Forum asserted that people would not be able to engage effectively in the democratization and constitution-making process if they are not able to speak freely without fear. The Forum therefore called on the military regime to repeal the 'public order amendment' decree and all other oppressive decrees to restore the rights of citizens to freedom of speech and association.¹⁹⁰²

One of the co-Convenors had shared the difficult space that the Women's Forum had started with, but which in the end turned out to be an energizing and inspiring space.¹⁹⁰³ The initial difficulty lay in the sense that, "everybody is negotiating and there's different power play going on which is normal in any movement," but what was inspiring about the process was that the women were willing to talk it through.¹⁹⁰⁴

Alluding to a challenge that arose when some new members joined that others did not like, she states:

[this] is reflective of the militarisation out there, that when they feel things are not going their way, they are not willing to listen to another point of view. I mean, I don't have to like what everybody else is saying, but you need to hear what they are really saying. There are groups or people who don't like that kind of space, I think they just like to be in a room where they are listening only to those who talk and sound like them.¹⁹⁰⁵

The co-Convenor believes that those who had since dropped out after the first forum feel that the women were not speaking with one voice, but to speak with one voice requires that everyone understands what their issue is.¹⁹⁰⁶ She asserts that,

we could easily dominate that space and say this is how we should think and get everyone else to think that way, but we try very hard not to because if you

¹⁹⁰² Fiji Women's Forum Outcome Document, 10-12 April 2012: p. 2;

¹⁹⁰³ Personal conversation with one of the NGOs co-Convenor; 10/12/2012;

¹⁹⁰⁴ *ibid*

¹⁹⁰⁵ Conversation with one of the NGOs co-Convenor; 10/12/2012;

¹⁹⁰⁶ Conversation with one of the NGOs co-Convenor; 10/12/2012;

want to sustain the Movement, we have to hear what everybody is saying even if you don't like it, we have to talk it through.¹⁹⁰⁷

A positive and energising lesson that emerged out of the Women's Forum was the willingness by women to listen, negotiate and talk through the emerging issues and challenges.¹⁹⁰⁸ The Forum responded to the Constitutional decree with the adage, "Act, don't React," by taking a proactive stance and subjecting the decree to their own interpretation.¹⁹⁰⁹ Taking an early leadership role, the Forum endorsed thirteen (13) women to represent them at the CA (constituent assembly) when no other sector had selected theirs.¹⁹¹⁰ While women were inspired to be leading the process, the co-Convenors had to tread cautiously knowing that the military felt threatened by them because "they know we are credible and they know we are legitimate, even if they say we are just a bunch of elite women, which is not true at all."¹⁹¹¹

The next step was to work on coalition-building which involved negotiating with other coalitions to get them on board so that by the time the Women's Forum began negotiations with the military regime, they have more people on their side.¹⁹¹² The co-Convenors were already talking to political parties, trade unions, faith-based organizations, while the indigenous women's movement would target the provinces to get the chiefs on board.¹⁹¹³ This coalition building stimulated an interesting dynamic in the women's movement, in which some groups they would not be seen with under normal circumstances, they were now willing to negotiate with, for the sake of building a larger coalition, being mindful also of their own 'non-negotiables.'¹⁹¹⁴

The constitutional process was a beacon of hope for the women's movement after eight long years under military control and its draconian laws, giving civil society a sense that change was possible and that people and communities could participate and influence decisions that would impact upon their lives.¹⁹¹⁵ To the credit of the Women's Forum, the

¹⁹⁰⁷Conversation with one of the NGOs co-Convenor, 10/12/2012;

¹⁹⁰⁸ibid

¹⁹⁰⁹ibid

¹⁹¹⁰ ibid

¹⁹¹¹ ibid

¹⁹¹² ibid

¹⁹¹³ ibid

¹⁹¹⁴ Conversation with one of the co-Convenors of Women's Forum. The women's non-negotiables would be based on the core principles of the Women's Forum namely: participation, transparency, accountability, respect for human rights and respect for the rule of law;

¹⁹¹⁵Buadromo, V. 2014. Fiji-the Constitutional Process: a view from FWRM: Legitimacy and peace process: from coercion to consent. Conciliation Resources, in <http://www.c->

constitutional process gathered 7,000 submissions to the CRC, about a third of these by women.¹⁹¹⁶

Constitutional review submissions: 2012

This section analyses extracts taken from ten individual women's submissions to the CRC,¹⁹¹⁷ and six women's organisations,¹⁹¹⁸ on three key issues of relevance to the current thesis: the constitutional process and the military regime's 'non-negotiables, the role of the military, and the coup culture and immunity.

The Fiji Constitutional Process decree (No. 58/2012) specifies that the role of the Constituent Assembly (CA) would be to debate and review the draft constitution, and that its composition would reflect the diversity of Fiji's people.¹⁹¹⁹ At its 3rd Consultation on December 3-4 2012, and in response to the Constitutional decree on the composition of the CA, the Women's Forum recommended to the military regime that to be truly representative of Fijian society, fifty percent of the CA must be women and that a woman should be the co-chair of the CA. The Women's Forum had gone a step further by endorsing the names of thirteen (13) women to represent them at the CA, to review and approve the draft constitution by the Ghai Commission.¹⁹²⁰ Any changes to the draft constitution would require a two third-majority in the CA.¹⁹²¹

Constitutional Process and 'Non-Negotiables'

Under the Fiji Constitutional Process decree (No. 58/2012), the military regime had set out key principles and values it considered as 'non-negotiable' and fundamental for the new Constitution. These included: a common and equal citizenry; a secular state; the removal of systemic corruption; an independent judiciary; the elimination of discrimination; good and transparent governance; social justice; one person, one vote, one value; the elimination of ethnic voting; proportional representation; and the lowering of voting age to 18 years.

[r.org/accord/legitimacy-and-peace-processes/fiji-constitutional-process-view-fiji-women-s-rights-movement](http://www.fiji.org/accord/legitimacy-and-peace-processes/fiji-constitutional-process-view-fiji-women-s-rights-movement)

¹⁹¹⁶ Buadromo, 2014: p.67

¹⁹¹⁷ The ten (10) included: 1 'other,' 1 Rotuman, 1 Indo-Fijian, and 7 Fijians;

¹⁹¹⁸ The six include Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC), Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding, Pan Pacific South East Asia Women's Association (PPSEAWA), Fiji Nursing Association (FNA), Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), Femlink Pacific, and an Indo-Fijian religious group;

¹⁹¹⁹ Fiji Constitutional Process decree (No. 58/2012), 9/3/2012

¹⁹²⁰ Women's Forum, 3rd Outcome document. December 3-4 2012;

¹⁹²¹ *ibid*

As guiding principles, the “non-negotiables,” fall into the same trap as the military regime’s charter, since they are imposed on the people without any consultation or debate, so the people could feel a sense of ownership over them. They are after all, the ones that would have to live with these principles, at the same time hold the government accountable to these principles.

Many women were averse to the ‘non-negotiable’ principles imposed by the military regime. A Fijian woman expressed concern that these ‘non-negotiables’ were being imposed by an unelected government which does not give the public a level playing field for discussing such important issues.¹⁹²² By assigning a ‘non-negotiable’ status to certain principles, the regime undermines the very foundation of a process that should be “free, inclusive and consultatory.”¹⁹²³ (sic). A further cause for concern was the uncertainty surrounding the make-up of the CA. Perhaps the greatest paradox is that the non-negotiable “principles” were being imposed by a regime that had seized power by force, thus renders null and void any claim to ‘principles’ or the rule of law, let alone, the constitution as the supreme law of the land.

Defining the role of the security forces

The Women’s Forum proposed that Fiji must return to democratic civilian leadership as soon as possible, and insisted that the Land Force Commander of the FMF should not be a focal point for constitution making and electoral reform processes.¹⁹²⁴ The Forum was adamant that no military or police personnel should have a role in civic education or awareness raising for the constitutional process or the Constituent Assembly, so that members of the public could engage freely and openly in the constitutional process without fear of retaliation from the security forces.¹⁹²⁵ The Forum also maintained that there should not be any military involvement in the government upon Fiji’s return to democracy, and that all military personnel in the public service must resign once Fiji returns to democratic rule.¹⁹²⁶ Individual women and women’s organisations also made recommendations on the role of the military in their submissions to the CRC, including, “that the Fiji military must

¹⁹²² Fijian woman in her submission to the CRC, 1/10/2012;

¹⁹²³ Fijian woman, late 20s, Submission to CRC, 15/10/2012

¹⁹²⁴ Fiji Women’s Forum Outcome Document, 10-12 April 2012: p. 2;

¹⁹²⁵ *ibid*

¹⁹²⁶ *ibid*

not have any role in the governing of the country.”¹⁹²⁷ This was to be a far-fetched wish as we shall see in the political process towards and following the 2014 elections.

A former school teacher questioned whether Fiji really needs a military.¹⁹²⁸ While she agrees that it has a role in rehabilitation, disaster management, reconstruction and engineering works, she insists that the military has no role in the political arena, since politicians are elected by the people to deal with political issues.¹⁹²⁹ She asserts that the police should handle community protection because when the military interferes in the role of the police and actual crimes occur such as home invasion, the police are not able to do anything since they are confused because the military has kept interfering in their roles.¹⁹³⁰

Many women agreed that the size of the military needs to be reduced and the ethnic imbalance in the composition of the military should be addressed to reflect the multi-ethnic composition of Fiji.¹⁹³¹ Another suggestion was to reduce the size dramatically by restricting it only to training male peacekeepers.¹⁹³² A retired civil servant recommended that fifty percent (50%) of places in the military should be reserved for females, and equal salary and training opportunities be available to both men and women.¹⁹³³ To gradually phase out the army, she suggested that the FMF engineer unit be transferred to the Public Works department (PWD) and the Water Authority, while the territorial forces (TF) should be increased and fully equipped.¹⁹³⁴ It was also suggested that the army barracks (QEB) and the armoury be relocated away from residential areas to other parts of Fiji such as Vanua Levu or the interior of Viti Levu.¹⁹³⁵

The suggestion by a Fijian woman to gradually phase out the military because it has largely become “unproductive” and has outlived its usefulness, was based on the lack of external threats.¹⁹³⁶ However, while women made recommendations that the military should be phased out or disbanded, they also offered alternatives on where these services could be

¹⁹²⁷ Female member of the minority ethnic group, referred to as “other” to avoid a backlash against her ethnic group; CRC submission October 2012;

¹⁹²⁸ Fijian female, former school teacher, submission to CRC, 12/10/2012;

¹⁹²⁹ *ibid*

¹⁹³⁰ *ibid*

¹⁹³¹ Female member of the minority ethnic group, referred to as “other” to avoid a backlash against her ethnic group; CRC submission October 2012;

¹⁹³² *ibid*;

¹⁹³³ Fijian female, retired civil servant in her late 60s, CRC submission on 12/10/2012;

¹⁹³⁴ ¹⁹³⁴ Fijian female, retired civil servant in her late 60s, CRC submission on 12/10/2012;

¹⁹³⁵ Female member of minority ethnic group, Submission to CRC, 12/10/2012;

¹⁹³⁶ Women’s organisation submission to CRC, October 2012;

utilised, so that military families, including women and children, are least impacted. For example, a Fijian woman who recommended that since the coups are carried out by the military and the only way to stop the coups is to disband the military, also proposed that army personnel could be re-directed to development work in rural areas.¹⁹³⁷

A Fijian woman believes that Fiji can follow existing models around the world that have no military.¹⁹³⁸ An example is Costa Rica, which got rid of its military 70 years ago following a coup in 1948, and now remains an “island of political stability, economic prosperity and contentment” in the midst of the chaos and instability that has beset its Central American neighbours.¹⁹³⁹ Costa Rica has diverted the savings from defense to improve education, health care and a durable social safety net.¹⁹⁴⁰ According to the 2017 World Happiness index, Costa Rica ranks first in Latin America and 12th in the world in happiness. The secret for its happiness? No standing army for the past 70 years.¹⁹⁴¹

This should not be difficult for Fiji, as its military is currently involved in peacekeeping and not combat.

‘Coup culture’ and Immunity

The successive military coups that has destabilised Fiji has given rise to the perception that Fiji suffers from a “coup culture,”¹⁹⁴² or a “coup syndrome.”¹⁹⁴³ Tarte defines the notion of “coup culture” as a pattern of instability that is repeatedly being played out. This study agrees that the “coup culture” is Fiji’s greatest challenge as a nation.¹⁹⁴⁴ Women have therefore made strong recommendations in their submissions to the CRC, on ways to address and eliminate the coup culture, which ought to be taken seriously by those in authority.

¹⁹³⁷ Fijian female submission to CRC, 17/09/2012;

¹⁹³⁸ Fijian female, early 50s, CRC submission on 10/10/2012;

¹⁹³⁹ Amanda Trejos.5/1/2018. Why getting rid of Costa Rica’s army 70 years ago has been a success, in U.S.A. Today, in <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/01/05/costa-rica-celebrate-70-years-no-army/977107001/>

¹⁹⁴⁰ Amanda Trejos.5/1/2018. Why getting rid of Costa Rica’s army 70 years ago has been a success, in U.S.A. Today, in <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/01/05/costa-rica-celebrate-70-years-no-army/977107001/>

¹⁹⁴¹ *ibid*

¹⁹⁴² Tarte, S. 2009. Reflections on Fiji’s ‘coup culture,’ in Fraenkel, J. and Firth, S. (eds). 2009. The 2006 Military take-over: A coup to end all coups? Ch. 27, p. 409;

¹⁹⁴³ Fraenkel, J. and Firth, S.(eds). 2009. Fiji’s coup syndrome, in Fraenkel et.al., Ch. 31, p.449;

¹⁹⁴⁴ Tarte, 2009: p. 409

Women across all ethnic groups insist that granting immunity to coup makers only encourages more coups or the coup culture, and that “the only way to put an end to coups in Fiji, is to stop offering immunity to anyone involved in a coup, past, present or future.”¹⁹⁴⁵ A multi-ethnic women’s group in a Suva suburb submitted that “there be no immunity clause in the constitution for all those who were and are involved in the overthrow of an elected government.”¹⁹⁴⁶ A young woman leader insists that immunity must be balanced with justice and reconciliation in equal measures:

It is my view that a vital factor to ending the history of coups in Fiji is to assign reconciliation and justice in equal measures. There are victims of coups who suffered very real and indescribable losses and there are perpetrators who are neither remorseful nor willing to accept their part in committing tremendous wrongs against fellow human beings and fellow citizens. I recommend that there is a need for restorative justice- that forgiveness and reconciliation must never negate justice. In this spirit, I am of the view that immunity should not be granted to coup perpetrators.¹⁹⁴⁷

Imrana Jalal had strongly argued that the granting of immunity to the military and coup makers is a sure recipe for encouraging more coups:

The rewarding of usurpers creates the coup cycle. Successful coups encourage others to copycat coups both locally and internationally. It is an abyss from which there is no return. ... We must punish those who seek to change the Constitution through unconstitutional means and we must never again accept a coup-installed Government because it rewards violence and lawlessness.¹⁹⁴⁸

A Fijian woman interviewee cautions:

It is as though we have to keep sweetening the army after every coup disaster, when they finally hand over power to a civilian government, not to carry out another coup in the future. But they can and will, unless and until

¹⁹⁴⁵ Fijian female, medical professional, 12/10/2012);

¹⁹⁴⁶ Multi-ethnic women’s group, October 2012

¹⁹⁴⁷ Young Fijian woman leader, 15/10/2012;

¹⁹⁴⁸ Jalal, P.I. 2002. ‘The Past is a foreign country- our history is not our destiny.’ Speech to Fiji Institute of Accountants Annual Congress, 9-11 May 2002, Sheraton Hotel, Nadi, Fiji: on theme: Rebuilding Fiji- the Way forward: p. 4; in:

[www.vanuatu.usp.ac.fj/.../FIA%20\(Fiji\)%20Speech%20Nadi%20May%202002%20%20](http://www.vanuatu.usp.ac.fj/.../FIA%20(Fiji)%20Speech%20Nadi%20May%202002%20%20)

they are taught their proper role as an institution, which is to continue to support a civilian government in its role.¹⁹⁴⁹

She further highlights the importance of honesty as a standard of measurement in dealing with the coup culture and immunity in Fiji, by quoting Thomas Jefferson that, “[t]he whole art of government consists in the art of being honest.”¹⁹⁵⁰ By using the Biblical story of God's people who were largely an agricultural community, she emphasized that God was very clear that they should not use dishonest standards (or scales) when measuring length, weight or quantity.¹⁹⁵¹ In the same way, the granting of immunity to coup makers was like using dishonest measuring standards:

When we repeat the same mistake it is failure, and is no longer an opportunity to succeed, improve or strengthen. Offering ‘amnesty’ or ‘immunity’ is the same. It is part of the poison that baits the army to carry out every subsequent coup, into abrogating any constitution, whatever we call it or however entrenched we make it because it gives them a bargaining chip since Rabuka's team got “amnesty.”¹⁹⁵²

A women's organization submits that ‘immunity’ must not be part of the military's “non-negotiables” in a constitutional process, and that it should be part of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) instead.¹⁹⁵³ They maintain that ‘immunity’ should only be granted by the public, that is, those who feel they have been wronged, so the military cannot just grant it to themselves. But the important question to ask if there is to be immunity, is:

immunity for what, or from what? Because you cannot get immunity for the killing or the bashing of people, so if there is immunity for some crimes, that needs to be negotiated and it is not for the military or the regime to make that decision.¹⁹⁵⁴

¹⁹⁴⁹ Fijian woman interviewee, late 50s, legal professional background, Auckland, April 2014

¹⁹⁵⁰ Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), was an American Founding Father who was the principal author of the Declaration of Independence and later served as the 3rd President of the United States from 1801 to 1809.

¹⁹⁵¹ New International Version (NIV), Leviticus 19:35; She also cites John Parnell who wrote, 'It matters not what you do, make a nation or a shoe. For he who does an honest thing, in God's pure sight is ranked a king.' excerpt from Bob Gass 'Word for today.'

¹⁹⁵² Fijian woman interviewee, late 50s, legal professional background, Auckland, April 2014

¹⁹⁵³ Part of a Women's NGO submission to CRC, 2012

¹⁹⁵⁴ *ibid*

The above recommendations reveal the deep insight and collective wisdom of the women on the impact of the coups and how the coup culture can be stopped by abolishing immunity. As an interviewee states, the granting of immunity after each coup is like sweetening the military, a situation called “*marimari*” in Fijian, as if to appease the military when it is clearly in the wrong. It can also be compared to what the interviewee argues is the use of dishonest scales as a national standard of behaviour, which only exposes unstable and unwise leadership that refuses to learn from the mistakes of the past.

Holding Officials accountable

The practice of allowing impunity for people in high positions who are not held accountable for their institutional or personal failures, also reflects a deep-seated malaise in the indigenous Fijian culture that is aptly captured in the phrase, “*taqomaka na ca*” (‘protecting wrongdoing or evil’). Under the militarised conditions following each coup, such “protective” practices are evident in the patron-client relationships known as, “*tabetabe*” which means “to gain favour or ingratiate oneself.”¹⁹⁵⁵ This wrong-doing became institutionalised through the grant of “immunity” to military coup makers, first Rabuka then Bainimarama, while Speight being a civilian, is still serving time in prison for his part in the 2000 coup.¹⁹⁵⁶ The CRW soldiers that supported him have already served prison sentences.

A women’s organisation stated in its submission to the CRC that, “coup perpetrators must be tried for committing a criminal treasonable act and must be convicted with the appropriate penalty.”¹⁹⁵⁷ Similarly, a Fijian woman had submitted that:

A person who agrees to take part in an endeavour must by right own up to the consequences of his actions. Everyone who agrees to commit treason, a most serious criminal offence against a nation, must face justice in the criminal law system and allow only the courts to deliver judgement and punishment according to established law.¹⁹⁵⁸

As recent history showed us, the 2006 coup was legitimized by the High Court ruling of Justice Anthony Gates in 2008 and the President’s abrogation of the 1997 constitution in 2009, in response to the Fiji Court of Appeal declaration that the 2006 coup was unlawful

¹⁹⁵⁵ See Phrase-finder, in <https://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/curry-favour.html>

¹⁹⁵⁶ 1990 Constitution, Chapter XIV, ‘Immunity Provisions,’ S. 164: p.168;

¹⁹⁵⁷ Submission by women’s organisation, 13/10/2012;

¹⁹⁵⁸ Fijian female submission to CRC, October 2012

and illegal. Seven years after his coup, the Bainimarama-led military regime released Fiji's fourth constitution of 2013, which granted "absolute and unconditional immunity" to the military and others who may be implicated in the events of the 2006 coup.¹⁹⁵⁹ A women's group had argued that the military cannot grant 'immunity' to itself, (that is, you cannot forgive yourself), as it should be those who have been wronged who should "pardon" or grant immunity.

Jalal's timely and perpetual reminder needs to be seriously considered by:

refusing to recognize an unlawful regime in the Courts of Law that has been put into place by a coup, whether or not they include the coup makers, [and] ...by punishing the usurpers for treason, which necessarily means there should be no pardons." ¹⁹⁶⁰

The issue of accountability is aptly summed up by a young Fijian man Jope Tarai, in a TEDx speech titled, "Re-thinking the Fijian Man" in which he shared the experience of growing up and witnessing the violence suffered by his late mother at the hands of his father, and how his mother would continue to forgive and accept the violence as a personal burden. Tarai states, "perhaps the most significant symbolism of the Fijian man is his ability to evade responsibility and accountability for his own actions." ¹⁹⁶¹

For far too long, Fijian men have been allowed to get away with their violence in the home and the coups at national level, to the detriment of Fiji as a nation. The military wives who experienced similar violence at the hands of returning peacekeepers, also excuse the violence as a normal part of their husband's military life, and their role as wives to understand by bearing the burden in silence. Such excuses, similar to the continuous granting of immunity to militarised men who commit treason, contribute to a sense of 'entitlement' by 'ethnicised,' 'masculinised' and 'militarised' men to break the law and perpetrate the coups, knowing they can avoid being held accountable.

This study calls for a greater scrutiny of the indigenous Fijian social system and socialisation process, to ensure that those in positions of leadership, including civilian and military men, are encouraged to take responsibility and be held accountable, for their actions.

¹⁹⁵⁹Fiji Government 2013 Constitution. Chapter 10: Immunity, Sections 155-158: p.83;

¹⁹⁶⁰ *ibid*

¹⁹⁶¹ Tarai, J. Re-thinking the Fijian man, TEDx Suva, in https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qh_ClbaSVTs

Constitutional Process Outcome: 2012-2013

Women had taken the lead in pushing the boundaries of the Constitutional process through the Women's Forum, which was instrumental in getting more women involved in the constitution making process.¹⁹⁶² To the credit of the Women's Forum, women's submissions comprised almost a third of over 7,000 submissions received by the CRC.¹⁹⁶³ This affirms that participation is key to the legitimacy of the constitution-making process.¹⁹⁶⁴ However, it soon became obvious that the regime was getting extremely agitated and defensive due to the high level of criticism engendered by the people's submissions to the CRC.¹⁹⁶⁵ They began resorting to antics designed to undermine the credibility of the Women's Forum and the constitutional review process in general.¹⁹⁶⁶ The Ghai draft constitution was finally presented to the President on December 21, 2012.¹⁹⁶⁷

In a dramatic display of hegemonic and militarized masculinity, the regime completely derailed its own process by rejecting the Ghai-draft, now labelled as the 'People's draft constitution,' and instead doctored its own draft constitution, throwing legitimacy out of the window in the process.¹⁹⁶⁸ It soon came to light that the regime had taken issue with some recommendations in the People's draft constitution which included: that the Bainimarama regime hand over to a care-taker government to take Fiji towards the elections in September 2014 to ensure a 'free and fair' process; that the military stay out of politics after the 2014 elections, and the grant of immunity only to individuals who apologise for and renounce their past actions on oath.¹⁹⁶⁹ The hegemonic response of the regime to the People's draft Constitution, can be likened to a 'spoiled brat' who becomes a 'bad loser' and throws tantrum when the game is not going in his favour.¹⁹⁷⁰ The sour

¹⁹⁶² Buadromo, 2014: p. 67

¹⁹⁶³ *ibid*

¹⁹⁶⁴ *ibid*

¹⁹⁶⁵ Buadromo, 2014: p. 67

¹⁹⁶⁶ *ibid*

¹⁹⁶⁷ Narsey, W. 27/12/2012. Fiji's Draft 2012 Constitution: the Pragmatic and the purist, in <https://narseyonfiji.wordpress.com/2012/12/27/fijis-draft-2012-constitution-the-pragmatic-and-the-purist-26-december-2012/>

¹⁹⁶⁸ Narsey, *ibid*

¹⁹⁶⁹ The Telegraph. 11/01/2013. 'Fiji dumps draft constitution,' in <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/australiaandthepacific/fiji/9794987/Fiji-dumps-draft-constitution.html>; see also ABC news, 23/20/2013. 'Constitutional expert Yash Ghai says he doubts if Fiji PM Frank Bainimarama has read constitution,' in <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-10-23/an-constitution-expert-yash-ghai-says-he-doubts-if-fiji-pm-has-/5039704>

¹⁹⁷⁰ See, Fraenkel, J. 2015. The remorseless power of incumbency in Fiji's September 2014 Election, in Brij Lal (ed). The Round Table, Special Issue on Fiji Elections, 104 (2): p. 10; Fraenkel notes that the SODELPA manifesto had described the Bainimarama-led administration as a

ending to the constitutional process is aptly captured in the Fijian phrase, '*mai tini botoilevu*' (come to an abrupt end) which also reflects an interviewee's comments that the military regime carries out things "half-half."¹⁹⁷¹

The plan for a Constituent Assembly was soon abandoned by the regime, with people only allowed limited time to comment on the regime's draft constitution.¹⁹⁷² The 2013 military draft constitution was finally enacted by military decree.¹⁹⁷³ Through another layer of 'charade' consultation, the regime subsequently prepared to 'consult' people to provide a superficial rubber-stamp of its draft constitution, although it was not prepared to allow for genuine consultation or a referendum for people's endorsement.¹⁹⁷⁴ As Buadromo asserts,

irrespective of whether or not the proposed 2014 electoral process is free and fair, the [regime] will declare itself legitimate. This does not give power back to the people but centralises and reinforces it among the elite.¹⁹⁷⁵

Shamima Ali also criticised the regime for reneging on its commitments and argues that the regime is doing exactly what it has criticised others for.¹⁹⁷⁶ Mick Beddoes of the United People's Party (UPP) believes that the interim government had been planning the rejection all along.¹⁹⁷⁷

New Zealand Foreign Minister Murray McCully, whose government had provided \$500,000 to help set up the Constitutional Review Commission remarks that the Fiji regime had effectively "trashed" the work of the Constitutional Commission.¹⁹⁷⁸ McCully notes that this has been the history of the whole process, and that the move by the military to draw up its own draft constitution was "rather larger a step back than any of us feel comfortable with."¹⁹⁷⁹ Unfortunately, the international community that funds such processes lacks

'government by tantrum, motivated by personal dislike, spite, vindictiveness and prejudice and a desire for revenge and payback' (p.10);

¹⁹⁷¹ Fijian female interviewee, NGO leader, 10/12/12;

¹⁹⁷² Buadromo, 2014: p. 67

¹⁹⁷³ *ibid*

¹⁹⁷⁴ Buadromo, 2014: p. 67

¹⁹⁷⁵ *ibid*

¹⁹⁷⁶ The Telegraph. 11/01/2013. 'Fiji dumps draft constitution,' in

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/australiaandthepacific/fiji/9794987/Fiji-dumps-draft-constitution.html>

¹⁹⁷⁷ *ibid*

¹⁹⁷⁸ The Telegraph. 11/01/2013. 'Fiji dumps draft constitution,' in

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/australiaandthepacific/fiji/9794987/Fiji-dumps-draft-constitution.html>

¹⁹⁷⁹ *ibid*

understanding of the hegemonic indigenous culture that could easily influence Fijian men who had grabbed power, to abandon donor-funded projects and processes when it goes against their vested interests, and to feel no qualms about it. In a speech at a workshop in Canberra in November 2014, Hon. Tupou Draunidalo notes that the misspending by the military was staggering, blowing its 2007 budget by \$45 million while the 'coup culture' had cost Fiji about ten billion dollars. She challenged the Australian and New Zealand governments:

I think Australia and New Zealand ought to be very interested in those figures. You give our country a lot of foreign aid. You effectively subsidise all of that misspending because you pick up the slack that our government can't pay for, as the money has gone to funding the military and the whims of coup makers. Any soft stance from the governments of Australia and New Zealand towards coup makers tells potential coup makers in Fiji that Australia and NZ don't mind rolling coup makers as long as they get back to elections as soon as possible.¹⁹⁸⁰

Draunidalo urges the governments of Australia and New Zealand to do more than the offer of development aid for democratic signposts such as elections and constitutions, without bothering to understand the local conditions that sustain the coup culture in Fiji.¹⁹⁸¹ This valuable advice on understanding the local conditions must be taken seriously by donor countries in post-coup projects aimed at restoring democracy.

'Quo Vadis' (Whither thou goest) the Women's Forum?

How did the women's movement manage to express agency by holding to account the military regime that had just trashed its own Constitutional process, in rejecting the Ghai draft Constitution and dismantling the Constituent Assembly (CA) process? If any lesson was learnt from the 2012 constitutional process, it demonstrated the fierce determination of the women's movement to effect change even when the situation appeared hopeless.¹⁹⁸²

¹⁹⁸⁰ Draunidalo, T. 2014. The 2014 Elections and the Coup Culture. Address at "Return to Democracy Workshop," Australian National University (ANU), Canberra, 5/11/2014.

¹⁹⁸¹ Draunidalo, T. 2014. The 2014 Elections and the Coup Culture. Address at "Return to Democracy Workshop, Australian National University (ANU), Canberra, 5/11/2014.

¹⁹⁸² Buadromo, 2014: p. 67

Despite the shrinking militarised space of engagement, the Women’s Forum settled on a parallel structure drawn from Kenya called the ‘Citizens Assembly’ to promote public participation in the constitutional process.¹⁹⁸³ The benefits of this process for Fiji meant that civil society could set up their own ‘People’s Assembly’ seeing that the military regime had rejected its own commissioned CRC “People’s” draft constitution and the Constituent Assembly.¹⁹⁸⁴ As Buadromo explains,

Women created a space where different representatives could come and debate – from both civil society and government. The Fijian media self-censors out of fear, but we were able to stream the whole process live on the internet. We encouraged people to send in questions for their representatives to respond to. ...In the end, the only space where we were able to participate was the People’s Assembly.¹⁹⁸⁵

The final day of the People’s Assembly coincided with the release of the military regime’s draft constitution.¹⁹⁸⁶ Buadromo clarified that the role of FWRM as part of the women’s movement and civil society in the post 2012 constitutional process was to:

help the government understand that they do not need to fear us. They should be working with us to try to decentralise power back to the people. Military rule only works for the military, not for civilians. So, people must be mobilised across a range of movements – not just the women’s movement. This is about getting citizens to become active, rather than just being bystanders watching events unfold. It is about empowering the community and citizens to say, “You can make this change!”¹⁹⁸⁷

Between April 8th to 10th 2013, fifty-three (53) women leaders representing diverse constituencies across Fiji gathered for the 4th Women’s Forum (4WF), joined by 440 virtual viewers through live-streaming on the internet.¹⁹⁸⁸

¹⁹⁸³ Buadromo, 2014: p. 67

¹⁹⁸⁴ *ibid*

¹⁹⁸⁵ Buadromo, 2014: pp.67-8

¹⁹⁸⁶ *ibid*, p.68

¹⁹⁸⁷ Buadromo, 2014: p. 68

¹⁹⁸⁸ 4th Fiji Women’s Forum, ‘Fiji Consultation on Women’s Participation and equal representation in Parliament; April 8-10· 2013, in <http://www.fwrm.org.fj/news/media-releases/67-all-category/news/press-releases/152-4th-fiji-consultation-on-women-s-participation-and-equal-representation-in-parliament>

Despite their efforts, women were bitterly disappointed that the principle of gender equality as reflected in the 2012 People's draft constitution was rejected and replaced by the regime's own draft,¹⁹⁸⁹ which threatened women's rights in a number of ways, and was less favourable to the position of women than the Ghai-People's draft.¹⁹⁹⁰ The regime's draft also contravenes CEDAW which Fiji had ratified in 1995.¹⁹⁹¹ The Women's Forum strongly condemned the regime's decision to abandon the Constituent Assembly and the lack of legitimacy and accountability by the imposed constitutional process.¹⁹⁹²

Despite a disappointing end to what began as an exciting democratisation process, the Women's Forum can be congratulated for having taken the initiative to mobilise and consolidate the efforts of women, towards greater individual and collective empowerment and liberation, including the mediation skills acquired to be able to negotiate and strategize around the limited space available. In the final analysis, the women's movement through the Women's Forum and the individual women that participated, gained more skills and knowledge, and turned out the real winners despite a dramatic and disappointing end to the constitution-making process.

Conclusion

Three key objectives had formed the subject matter of this chapter. The first, investigates the various manifestations of cultural and militarised masculinity demonstrated by the military and the police forces in the various forms of gender-based violence against opponents and critics of the 2006 coup. The first section of the chapter reveals how the military utilises a culturally-sanctioned, hyper-militarized masculinity to deal with or respond to opponents and critics at various levels of Fijian society. First, the prevailing civil-military relations between the Qarase government and the Fiji military under Bainimarama was examined. It detected a stubborn streak of pride and ego between the two Fijian men, reinforced by a hegemonic and hyper-militarised masculinism by Bainimarama and his military officers, who could have resolved their differences amicably for the good of the nation, but instead catapulted Fiji to its fourth disastrous military coup. Another example was the spat between two security services, led by the military against the police force, over a supply of arms. The conflict demonstrated the first inter-service rivalry between the

¹⁹⁸⁹ 4th Fiji Women's Forum, 'Fiji Consultation on Women's Participation and equal representation in Parliament: April 8-10 2013;

¹⁹⁹⁰ Buadromo, 2014: p. 67

¹⁹⁹¹ *ibid*

¹⁹⁹² *ibid*

security services, and the increasing militarisation of both the police and correction services following each coup, by appointing senior military officers to head the police and corrections services. This has led to a demoralised police force and corrections services, who are unable to reach their full potential in the performance of their roles due to interference from the military. Also noted are the bullying tactics of the military against the two services, by treating them like poor step-brothers.

This chapter has also attempted to answer a burning question on the contradictions between the role of Fijian soldiers as global peacekeepers, and in the national coups. The chapter advances the contradiction pointed out by Whitworth, that the training of soldiers for combat is at odds with the peacekeeping operations in which Fijian peacekeepers are overwhelmingly involved, thereby creating a “crisis in masculinity.” As they struggle to cope with this “crisis,” returning peacekeepers have resorted to violence against women and vulnerable family members in the home, and through the coups at national level. The chapter underlines a significant finding, that military wives feel that the violence they face is a personal burden they must bear, for the nation. The chapter further scrutinises the various manifestations of this “crisis of masculinity” through violence against civil society following the coup, as demonstrated by the “buturaki” culture (culture of mob beating) of beating to death of young Fijian men, the victimisation of indigenous Fijian institutions and people, threats against perceived opponents, and a sense of entitlement displayed by the men in uniform to intimidate unarmed members of the public.

The second objective examines the element and operationalisation of ‘political patronage,’ a key component of military rule that is demonstrated by the emergence of an elite class of senior military officers, which has displaced the ruling chiefly class, ousted the politicians and asserted for itself a position of dominance in the ethnic Fijian hierarchical system. Under the prevailing system of “payoffs, promotions and patronage” an elite class of senior military officers has emerged as the premier source of indigenous Fijian power, acquired by usurping power through the barrel of the gun. The military coups are ultimate expressions of a culturally endorsed hegemonic and hyper-militarised masculinity which has held Fiji to ransom since Rabuka’s coups of 1987.

The third objective examines the capacity of women to express agency through the twin orientations of ‘resistance’ and ‘reform,’ in response to various forms of ‘gender-based violence’ and suppressive rule by military. Resistance-oriented agency was evident when individual women activists spoke out, demonstrated and displayed banners which the

military saw as open defiance. This led to the psychological and physical assault and torture of a number of indigenous women at the military camp. The punishment meted out to the women through the method of “psy-ops” (psychological operations), was clearly intended to discourage others from speaking out. Reform-oriented agency was demonstrated by women through ‘a non-confrontational approach’ in which women and their organisations decided to adopt a more collaborative approach to the military regime, to advance women’s participation in the reformatory democratisation process. This took place under the more positive climate of the constitutional review process in 2012. A significant outcome of this engagement was the launch of the Women’s Forum, led by key women’s organisations, which initiated and directed strategies for women’s active participation in civic education and the constitutional review process ahead of the 2014 elections, the first in eight years of military rule. Women’s submissions to the CRC constituted thirty percent (30%) of the 7,000 submissions, which included recommendations on eliminating the coup culture, by abolishing immunity for coup makers, and by holding coup perpetrators accountable for the treasonous coup crimes. Although the CRC review ended in disarray as the regime refused to accept the ‘Ghai draft’ constitution (also termed ‘People’s draft’), and drew up its own 2013 constitution, women’s vision for a Fiji that is founded on gender equality and the principles of good governance, must be taken seriously by those in leadership to chart Fiji forward on a path of peace, stability and genuine democracy.

CHAPTER 8

WOMEN'S AGENCY IN RESPONSE TO MILITARIZATION

Introduction

This research highlights women's experience and voice as useful sources of knowledge.¹⁹⁹³ The current chapter thus expands on expressions of women's agency against aspects of militarisation that are not covered in response to the coups of 1987, 2000 and 2006.

There are three main aims of this chapter, first to expound on two 'action-oriented' components of feminist research discussed earlier, second, to highlight the concerns of women over the military cadet training scheme and its impact on the militarisation of youths and students in schools, and third, to assess the post-coup transitional 2014 elections from a gender and militarisation perspective.

This study has been guided by five principles of feminist research practice which include: a focus on gender intersectionality, highlighting women's experiences, reflexivity as a source of insight, participatory method of gathering data (through semi-structured interview and 'talanoa') and a policy or action-oriented component for social transformation. The goal of producing knowledge that is transformative and contributes to women's empowerment and liberation,¹⁹⁹⁴ is advanced here in the form of two 'action-oriented' research models that women have been involved in or proposed for advocacy and activism.

These action-oriented models are explored from the perspective of women's agency,¹⁹⁹⁵ which have contributed to greater understanding of women's actions when expressed within and against the constraining structures of the post-coup conditions of oppression and militarisation.¹⁹⁹⁶ The 'action-oriented' models include a "Peace and Reconciliation" model and a proposal for a 'Truth and Reconciliation' Commission (TRC).

¹⁹⁹³ Campbell and Wasco (2000) as cited in Deutsch, 2004: p.888

¹⁹⁹⁴ See Taylor, 1998: p.360

¹⁹⁹⁵ See for example, Leckie, J. (2002); Harrington (2004); Chattier (2005); Dickson-Waiko (2003); Pollard (2000); George (2012);

¹⁹⁹⁶ Eccles, Zoe. Women's agency in the Pacific: a reappraisal,
https://www.academia.edu/9240198/Womens_Agency_in_the_Pacific_a_reappraisal

I. Peace and Reconciliation Model for ‘*Taukei-Vulagi*’ Identity dilemma

In 2016, a ‘peace and reconciliation’ process took place in Noco district in the province of Rewa, where a group of descendants of Indo-Fijian indentured labourers were traditionally “adopted” by *Tui Noco* (Chief of Noco) as “*na luvedra na Ratu*” (children of the Chief). This was a gesture of goodwill by the *Tui Noco*, who assured the group of a sense of identity with the *vanua* (district) of Noco, and a sense of belonging as “*kai Noco*” (belonging to) and “*kai Rewa*.”

The account of the peace process is given from the perspective of Sashi Kiran, a vivacious Indo-Fijian woman, who is the Executive Director of a Lautoka-based NGO called the Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises and Development (FRIENDS). Kiran serves as spokesperson for the group and captures well in her responses some of the predicaments discussed earlier, on *vanua*-based ‘*Taukei/vulagi*’ identity.

Kiran related the background of the peace process and what it meant for those involved in the process,¹⁹⁹⁷ which began when they initiated a process of tracing back their roots to the first boatload of indentured labourers that arrived in Fiji on the ‘*Leonidas*’ from India in May 1879. Five years later in May 1884, a fifth boatload of 438 people arrived in the ‘*Syria*’ which ran aground on Nasilai reef off Noco, Rewa, killing 56 people.¹⁹⁹⁸ According to Kiran, it was the indigenous Fijians of Noco that jumped into the sea to rescue and save their ancestors, “even though they must have looked strange and couldn’t communicate.” In their journey to learn more about their ancestors, Kiran’s group eventually ended up meeting with the *Tui Noco*, *Ratu Isoa Damudamu*.¹⁹⁹⁹ In accepting their traditional presentation of *tabua* (whale’s tooth), *Tui Noco* shocked them by stating that they belonged to his *vanua* by “virtue of the burials” of their ancestors in his chiefly ground.²⁰⁰⁰ As Kiran states,

We were shocked in silence as for the first time we heard from a chief that we “belonged” to a *vanua*! Something like when we won gold at Rio²⁰⁰¹ — you know — tears, joy, and speechlessness!²⁰⁰²

¹⁹⁹⁷ Kiran, Sashi. 2016. ‘For peace which is true,’ in Fiji Times online, 29/9/2016.

<http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=372628>

¹⁹⁹⁸ Giriti- history in Giriti.org, http://giriti.org/?page_id=164

¹⁹⁹⁹ Kiran, 2016

²⁰⁰⁰ *ibid*

²⁰⁰¹ The Fiji Rugby 7s team won Fiji’s first gold medal ever in the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro in August 2016, just a month before the adoption process.

²⁰⁰² Kiran, 2016

Such is the kind of feeling that comes over those who feel that they have come home at last, now that they were traditionally 'adopted' as 'kai Noco' and part of the Rewa province²⁰⁰³ and *matanitu*²⁰⁰⁴ (confederacy) of Burebasaga. At the Rewa Day celebrations in 2016, Tui Noco presented the newly adopted members of his clan to the paramount chief of Rewa, Marama na Roko Tui Dreketi who accepted them as "kai Rewa."

This study suggests that this model may serve to address the '*vulagi*' status dilemma that Indo-Fijians have bemoaned since their ancestors arrived over a hundred years ago. This '*taukei-vulagi*' dilemma is at the heart of identity politics that has fuelled the "indigenous-rights" coups.

Kiran is ecstatic that they are now tied to, and belong to the *vanua* of Rewa, and expressed the hope that they can genuinely work together for peace and prosperity for Fiji as a whole.²⁰⁰⁵ When asked how the new status changed anything for them since all are citizens of Fiji, Kiran made the following response:

We are fortunate to be citizens and hold Fiji passports. This Government has given all of us a common name [Fijian]. In every way possible we do belong. Any event in Fiji starts with a traditional Fijian ceremony in recognition of the 'vanua.' In each ceremony we realise we belong to this country but we are still 'outsiders' as far as the people of the land are concerned. As the head of an organisation when a 'sevusevu' is presented, awkwardly I am referred to as *vulagi* or visitor. When my iTaukei (ethnic Fijian) colleagues visit a new community they immediately identify themselves from a place and they have a relationship as 'kai, tauvu, naita' and I always used to think how wonderful these relations passed down through generations connected the people of the land.²⁰⁰⁶

Kiran had never imagined that one day she too would have an '*ai cavuti*, 'or a reference to a chiefly ground to be associated with, as "*Vunisalevu na Ratu na Turaga na Tui Noco*" or

²⁰⁰³ Rewa is headed by paramount chief, *Roko Tui Dreketi*, Ro Teimumu Kepa

²⁰⁰⁴ There are 3 main confederacies under which all the 14 provinces in Fiji are subsumed:

1) Burebasaga (6 provinces), headed by *Roko Tui Dreketi* (Ro Teimumu Kepa) paramount chief of Rewa province, and includes the provinces of Rewa, Ba, Nadroga-Navosa, Namosi, Serua, Kadavu; 2) Kubuna (4) headed by Vunivalu Tui Kaba of Bau (Cakobau family), includes Tailevu, Ra, Naitasiri, Lomaiviti; 3) Tovata (4) led by Tui Cakau, includes Cakaudrove, Bua, Macuata, Lau;

²⁰⁰⁵ Kiran, 2016

²⁰⁰⁶ Kiran, 2016

*“Burebasaga na Gone Marama Bale na Roko Tui Dreketi.”*²⁰⁰⁷ Acknowledging the impact of her new status as “kai Noco,” and “kai Rewa,” Kiran states that:

Since ‘Rewa Day’ all my organisational *sevusevu* has acknowledged the chiefly ground of Noco. The week after Rewa Day, I was in Ra. There was a queue of people welcoming me as their *naita*.²⁰⁰⁸ I have a relationship with each village visited and the *iTaukei* people have been generously educating me. It's a totally new leaf being turned. I have worked in many of these communities and have not been received like I am now. When we say we belong it means we are a part of the *vanua*, we have relationships with the people of the land that is based on their identity system.²⁰⁰⁹

Kiran’s recognition of her sense of belonging as being tied to the *vanua* provides an answer to Lal’s lament of Indo-Fijians being regarded as *vulagi* despite over hundred years of settlement in Fiji. This is a reciprocal relationship which also calls on those accorded the privilege, to have a deeper understanding of the ‘vanua’ relations and obligations, as Kiran and her group have obviously done. If more *vanua* chiefs or heads of clans replicated *Tui Noco’s* action by adopting Indo-Fijians who have settled or leased their lands, more integration and understanding would result, which would bring about a greater sense of belonging and understanding.

Kiran now has a greater appreciation and understanding of what it means to be a “kai Noco, or kai Rewa” which ties her to a *vanua*, hence she is no longer a *vulagi*. When asked whether being part of the *vanua* means trying to claim ownership of land as well, her balanced response reveals a deep understanding of the indigenous Fijian outlook:

It is [a] well known fact that landowners are custodians of resources to ensure they are conserved for future generations. The *iTaukei* people also have to lease land from their *mataqali* if they wish to use these resources for themselves. So, the question of owning resources does not even arise. We have received so much more than whatever we could ever ask for. We hope

²⁰⁰⁷ Title of acknowledgment of chief of Noco (Tui Noco), a district in the Rewa province, and the title of acknowledgment for the paramount chief of Rewa, Roko Tui Dreketi and head of Burebasaga confederacy.

²⁰⁰⁸ ‘Naita’ or ‘Veitabani’ relationship is a kinship relation that is based on two sets of people having ancestral spirits that were cross-cousins. They may refer to each other as ‘Naita’ and may treat each other jokingly or disrespectfully; in Gatty, 2009: p. 244;

²⁰⁰⁹ Kiran, 2016

that we do justice to the faith the Tui Noco has placed in us by so openly accepting us [as] his people, giving us the honour of using his people's *cavuti* and also that of the Roko Tui Dreketi.²⁰¹⁰

Kiran acknowledges that the majority of Indo-Fijians had never stepped in a Fijian village or home, hence the need to “create many platforms for cross-cultural learning in fun and practical ways,” such as in schools, the workplace and communities.”²⁰¹¹ She is aware that many Indo-Fijians have expressed a genuine desire to learn the Fijian (*Taukei*) language and culture and vice versa, which creates the opportunity for adult education institutes to offer language and cultural courses.²⁰¹²

Such a model of reconciliation marks an important milestone in bridging the inter-ethnic divide that has existed since the colonial days of racial segregation. It can contribute towards genuine understanding and treating each other as equals, reflecting what Ratu Sukuna had envisioned seventy years earlier when he recognised that equality comes through confidence, through knowing each other, through contact, and cannot be forced. When it is forced, it is of little value.²⁰¹³

Certainly there are communities in other parts of Viti Levu, Vanua Levu, Taveuni, Levuka, or the outer islands where native Fijians and Indo-Fijians have integrated as they live side by side, speak each other’s language, adopt and respect each other’s cultures, thus providing great models for multiracialism and multiculturalism.²⁰¹⁴ There is certainly great potential for Chiefs and clan heads in Fijian communities to emulate the goodwill shown by the late Tui Noco by “adopting” Indo-Fijian brothers and sisters into their clans, so they could at last have a genuine sense of belonging to the *vanua*. This study acknowledges that such a relationship must be based on mutual respect and reciprocity.

It is also fitting that two women, Sashi Kiran and the Marama Roko Tui Dreketi, Ro Teimumu Kepa, have been the driving forces towards this reconciliation process in support of the Tui Noco.

²⁰¹⁰ Kiran, 2016

²⁰¹¹ *ibid*

²⁰¹² Kiran, 2016

²⁰¹³ Scarr, 1983: pp 402-403;

²⁰¹⁴ Alexander, 2006: p. 19,

II. Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

The second action-oriented model is a proposal for a “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” (TRC) which a number of interviewees and women have proposed, to address the inter-generational trauma suffered by victims of successive coups, and for the healing of the nation as a whole.

A number of interviewees had suggested that instead of granting immunity or amnesty for the military, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) would be a more practical process of purging everyone, including the army and civilians, from the impact of the coups.²⁰¹⁵ It would also be a fair means of addressing the trauma, harm and suffering, the costs and recovery burdens, including the inter-generational impact of the coups on individuals, the families, community and the national psyche.²⁰¹⁶ A member of the Women’s Forum agreed that this should be a national process. She believes that the only way to find a solution is to be sitting across from the military and alongside them talking about the solutions:²⁰¹⁷

We can’t be like this forever, and someone needs to be telling them that, alright right now you are the dictator, but if you continue to go down this path, someone else is going to usurp you. This is the way this thing works, this is how it’s being going, all over the world and here in Fiji...and I think the only change we can hope for is coming up with a TRC.²⁰¹⁸

The interviewee believes that the TRC process should follow a transitional justice process and be included in the constitutions because some of those issues that would come out of the TRC are crimes that will require prosecutions to be made.²⁰¹⁹ She also emphasized the need to document women’s and people’s experiences of the military coups as a piece of history:

²⁰¹⁵ Fijian female in late 50s, University graduate and professional; 20/4/2015

²⁰¹⁶ *ibid*

²⁰¹⁷ Fijian female head of NGO, 40s, 10/12/2012

²⁰¹⁸ *ibid*

²⁰¹⁹ *ibid*

There is a need for a Memoriam and history books written. There needs to be a park or something where it shows, this is what happened on this day, these many people were killed, so you don't go back down that road again. We are not good in documenting events and happenings...it's like we just want to forget these atrocities quickly. We haven't even documented much of what happened in 1987 and 2000, and if we listen to people, they have different views of it, there are conflicting stories so you don't really get the truth.²⁰²⁰

Her views reminded me of the Peace Museum in Hiroshima and Nagasaki that served to remind the Japanese people in perpetuity of the horrors of the second world war, and how slogans like, "No More Hiroshima! No more Nagasaki," serve as a reminder not to go down that path again. By documenting the horrors of the coups in Fiji's history, there is a greater chance of people remembering and committing never to go through the experience again, which is also a good way of holding people accountable.²⁰²¹

The interviewee also expressed the hope that someday, since the world has become so globalized, it may be possible to arrest these people like what they did to Pinochet in the UK ²⁰²² "so they may be held accountable to international treaties that we sign to."²⁰²³

III. Cadet training scheme: Militarizing Youths and Education system

A third issue related to women's agency in this chapter, is the concern by many women, particularly former school teachers, over the increasing militarization of young people through the "military cadet scheme" in schools, which in recent years have even spread to girls' schools and Indo-Fijian schools.

In 2015, the Minister for Youth and Sports announced that the Ministry was planning to implement cadet training in all schools and youth training centres around the country.²⁰²⁴

²⁰²⁰ *ibid*

²⁰²¹ Fijian female head of NGO, 40s, 12/10/2012;

²⁰²² Gen Augusto Pinochet came to power in Chile following a US-backed coup d'état on 11/9/1973, that overthrew the democratically elected Socialist govt of President Salvador Allende. He was indicted on 10/10/1998, for human rights violations committed during his dictatorship, and arrested while on a trip to London for medical treatment 6 days later, held for a year before being released in March 2000;

²⁰²³ Fijian female head of NGO, 40s, 12/10/2012;

²⁰²⁴ Meli Tavaga. Fiji village news, 13/07/2015. 'Cadet training may soon be implemented in all schools,' in <http://fijivillage.com/news/Cadet-training-may-soon-be-implemented-in-all-schools-k92s5r/>

The cadet training would be conducted by the military to ensure that youths are “imparted with values required to address social issues, and strengthen character education.”²⁰²⁵

A woman politician had responded that the cadet system in schools would just be “a breeding ground for more coup makers.”²⁰²⁶ Similar views were expressed by a retired female school teacher who pointed out that the cadet programme had produced military officers like Sitiveni Rabuka and Viliame Naupoto, “*o ira na luveni cadet ya,*” (they are offsprings of the cadet scheme).²⁰²⁷ By this she means that the cadet system had produced coup makers like Rabuka and coup supporters like Naupoto, both former students of Queen Victoria School (QVS) which has had a long-running cadet training programme. She also expressed concern over recent media images which showed girls holding old rifles during their pass out parade, “*sa bau rairai ca dina.*” (“It really looks bad”).²⁰²⁸

Since the 2006 coup, there has been an increase in demand for cadet training in schools particularly among ethnic Fijian schools. These have included Ratu Kadavulevu School (RKS), a boarding school for Fijian boys in Tailevu, which revived its cadet training in 2010 after a lapse of 17 years.²⁰²⁹ The highlands were not spared when Wainimakutu primary and secondary schools in Namosi held their first pass-out parade in 2010.²⁰³⁰ The principal stated that they decided to have cadet training for the students after observing a lack of discipline and orderliness in their studies, so were looking forward to better characters in their students.²⁰³¹ Even more surprising was Bhawani Dayal Arya College, an Indo-Fijian school outside Suva managed by Arya Samaj, which created history when it launched its new cadet training program in 2010.²⁰³² The school manager stated that the cadet training would help improve “discipline” levels in the school.²⁰³³

Equally surprising was Adi Cakobau School (ACS), a boarding school for Fijian girls near Nausori which introduced cadet training for the first time in October 2013 to mark the

²⁰²⁵ *ibid*

²⁰²⁶ Female political commentator, professional, mid-40s: 13/07/2015;

²⁰²⁷ Female interviewee, former vice principal, current women’s NGO leader, 60s, 14/12

²⁰²⁸ Female interviewee, former vice principal, current women’s NGO leader, 60s, 14/12/12

²⁰²⁹ Fiji Sun, 2/5/2010. School Revives Cadet Training, in <http://fijisun.com.fj/2010/05/02/school-revives-cadet-training/>

²⁰³⁰ Fiji Sun, 1/5/2010. ‘Cadet Training In The Highlands,’ in <http://fijisun.com.fj/2010/05/01/cadet-training-in-the-highlands/>

²⁰³¹ Fiji Sun, 1/5/2010. ‘Cadet Training In The Highlands,’ in <http://fijisun.com.fj/2010/05/01/cadet-training-in-the-highlands/>

²⁰³² Rinu Shyyam. Fiji Sun, 5/6/2012. Cadet training for school, in <http://fijisun.com.fj/2012/06/05/cadet-training-for-school/>

²⁰³³ *ibid*

school's 65th anniversary.²⁰³⁴ The principal expressed that since piloting the scheme, the school had noticed a lot of changes in the girls:

I told the parents on Sunday the change we've noticed in the girls, their responsiveness to commands, their alertness, they've been punctual, the cleanliness, all these things are the result of these programmes, it's not because we have not been teaching it, ... but it's different now.²⁰³⁵

The principal's comments echoed those of former Land Force Commander Pita Driti who was chief guest at the passing out parade at RKS:

Many said that cadet training leads to the militarization of schools. It is not so. Cadet training is aimed at instilling discipline in students. It is through cadet training that students will learn to hear 'one command,' 'one instruction' and will follow each and every command precisely as it is given. This is what cadet is all about. It will discipline our students as future leaders to do what is right, where and when necessary with order and credibility.²⁰³⁶

It is surprising that school principals, parents and the school management, have seen fit to embrace the cadet scheme and its militaristic system of "discipline" that listens to "one command," and "one instruction," without considering the role of the military in the military coups in Fiji. By endorsing the cadet system in their schools, they are sending a terrible message to the young people that the coups are alright, and that military discipline is the model to follow, thereby turning a blind eye on the role of the military in the violent, forceful take-over of power.

The militarization of young students at primary and high school is a cause for concern among many interviewees, who feel that this contributes to many young cadets aspiring to join the military after leaving school.²⁰³⁷

²⁰³⁴ Apakuki Coka, FBC news. 2/10/2013. 'ACS prepares for first cadet pass-out,' in <file:///E:/militarism%20gender%20VAW/fiji%20gender%20%20docs/Men%20only%20-%20Fiji%20Times%20Online.htm>

²⁰³⁵ Apakuki Coka, FBC news. 2/10/2013. 'ACS prepares for first cadet pass-out,' in <file:///E:/militarism%20gender%20VAW/fiji%20gender%20%20docs/Men%20only%20-%20Fiji%20Times%20Online.htm>

²⁰³⁶ Fiji Sun, 2/5/2010. School Revives Cadet Training, in <http://fijisun.com.fj/2010/05/02/school-revives-cadet-training/>

²⁰³⁷ Fiji Sun, 01/05/2010. Cadet Training in The Highlands, in <http://fijisun.com.fj/2010/05/01/cadet-training-in-the-highlands/>

As an interviewee argues,

Students are not given a choice, it is a top-down approach and it's compulsory. The military is an institution that does not encourage members to think for themselves or the freedom to make choices and learn to take accountability over their choices, as decisions are made on command and obeying orders is paramount. Especially since the majority of those who join the military are indigenous Fijians. What if the students could make a choice, like they do with other subjects or a club, whoever wants to join can! Not everybody is sporty, so they can choose to go there.²⁰³⁸

Another interviewee who heads a regional NGO shares her fears on the impact of militarization on young people:

a new, what we may call 'military culture' and 'hype' is unfolding especially in our boys and girls [who] now see the military as the 'profession' to go for. Hence the many applicants for the British Army each year and the RFMF. Intolerance is high and violence in schools has reached levels never been seen before ...even against teachers, which are now reported almost weekly.²⁰³⁹

Many women worry that the militarization of young people has produced more violence in schools, with students no longer prepared to resolve differences through peaceful, rational and respectful discussions and negotiations, choosing instead the way of "force" and violence as expressed through the military coups. This is certainly not the model of "discipline" that teachers and the school managers should be promoting in their schools.

Many have recommended more peaceful and non-militarised alternatives for instilling discipline and character-building among young people, instead of the militarised cadet system. A former vice principal suggested that initiatives such as the Girl Guides and Scouts systems or 'school clubs,' are "more appropriate ways of instilling discipline for youths."²⁰⁴⁰

²⁰³⁸ Fijian female interviewee, retired vice principal, NGO leader in her 60s; 12/12/2012;

²⁰³⁹ Fijian female, retired teacher and lecturer, NGO-head, 70s; 10/01/2015

²⁰⁴⁰ Fijian female interviewee; 12/12/2012

Another interviewee shared similar views:

there are other ways you can instil discipline without having to dress up in military uniforms with this hierarchical kind of relationship where someone is the leader and walking around with guns.²⁰⁴¹

She recommends sports as a good way of creating discipline and motivation, since it teaches people about teamwork and cooperation, where no one is higher than the other, “everyone plays as a team, each player is valued and all are equal because they are all dependent on each other.”²⁰⁴²

The increasing demand for cadet training in schools since the 2006 coup is a consequence of the normalising of ‘militarization.’ Parents, teachers, the school management and other stakeholders have by default, chosen to take the easy way out by surrendering their role to “discipline” their children to militarised agencies such as the military and the police. These masculinist militarised agencies are hardly appropriate models of ‘discipline’ for young people, since they have been implicated in the perpetration of violence, torture and law-breaking, through the military coups in Fiji.

IV. Women and the 2014 Election

Finally, this chapter ends with an analysis of the 2014 election results, and its significance for women and democratisation in Fiji. The section examines the ‘exit strategy’ of the military regime which has maintained tight control over Fiji for eight years since Bainimarama seized power from the SDL-FLP government on 5 December 2006. It analyses the transitional process in the lead up to and conduct of the 2014 elections, and the role and achievement of women in the 2014 elections. It also looks at the impact of militarization on the election results, in terms of the proportion of former military officers gaining seats in Parliament, compared to women.

The military regime’s 2013 constitution was the legal basis upon which the 2014 election was held, and it would be difficult to amend or change as it would require a three-quarter majority both in parliament and in a referendum to do so.²⁰⁴³

²⁰⁴¹ Female Fijian interviewee, women’s NGO head, 40 yrs, 10/12/2012;

²⁰⁴² Female Fijian interviewee, women’s NGO head, 40 yrs, 10/12/2012;

²⁰⁴³ Buadromo, 2014: pp.68;

The transitional 2014 elections presented many critical changes to the electoral process in Fiji since the elections in 2006 under the 1997 constitution. Following the the regime's rejection of the Ghai Commission's draft constitution (People's draft), the military regime then doctored its own 2013 constitution, which drastically reformed the parliamentary system. A uni-cameral legislature of 50 elected members replaced the bi-cameral Parliament consisting of the 71-member elected Lower House, and the 32-member appointed Senate, as contained in the 1997 constitution.²⁰⁴⁴ The voting system was transformed from an ethnic-based communal representation system, to an Open list-proportional representation voting system with a single national constituency.²⁰⁴⁵ Political parties and independent candidates must reach a minimum 5 percent national threshold of votes to be eligible for a seat in Parliament. The voting age was also reduced from 21 years (1997 constitution) to 18 years in the 2013 constitution.²⁰⁴⁶

Fiji's population at the 2007 census was 837,271, and the Fiji Elections office recorded a total of 591,101 registered voters, of whom 500,078 had cast their vote, indicating a very high 85 percent voter turn-out.²⁰⁴⁷

The women's movement had played a pivotal role in building the momentum and consensus around gender equality in the lead up to the 2014 elections.²⁰⁴⁸ The Fiji Women's Forum must be commended for efforts towards increasing women's participation and leadership in the democratisation process.²⁰⁴⁹ Forty-four (44) women stood as candidates in the election, comprising 17.7 percent of the total 249 candidates, with one standing as an Independent while 43 women stood in 6 political parties.²⁰⁵⁰ By ethnicity, 11 of the 44 women candidates were Indo-Fijians, 1 Rotuman, 1 of mixed race, and 31 (70%) ethnic Fijians. Fijian women also featured prominently as party officials, with Ro Teimumu Kepa as SODELPA Party Leader, while four others were Presidents of their political parties. These included Lavinia Padarath as President of Fiji Labour Party (FLP),

²⁰⁴⁴ Chapter 3, 2013 constitution; see also Pacific women in politics, Country profile: Fiji; in <https://www.pacwip.org/country-profiles/fiji/>

²⁰⁴⁵ *ibid*

²⁰⁴⁶ 1997 constitution and 2013 Fiji constitution

²⁰⁴⁷ Pacific women in politics, Country profile: Fiji; in <https://www.pacwip.org/country-profiles/fiji/>

²⁰⁴⁸ George, 2012 as cited in Chattier, 2015: p. 178;

²⁰⁴⁹ The Fiji Women's Forum in <http://www.fwrn.org.fj/programmes/fiji-womens-forum>

²⁰⁵⁰ Chattier, P. 29/10/2014. Fiji's women speak up in growing numbers inside parliament, in <https://theconversation.com/fijis-women-speak-up-in-growing-numbers-inside-parliament-32739>

Lynda Tabuya of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Tupou Draunidalo of NFP and Jiko Luveni of the Fiji First Party (FFP).²⁰⁵¹

When the election results were announced on 21 September 2014, the Fiji First party had polled 59.2 percent of votes cast, which secured 32 seats for them in Parliament, SODELPA received 28.2 percent of the vote for which they gained 15 seats, while NFP received 5.5 percent of votes cast, which gave them 3 seats.²⁰⁵² It is interesting that of the 32 elected FFP candidates, 10 are former military officers,²⁰⁵³ accounting for 31% of the total FFP members, compared to only five women. Of the 15 elected MPs in the SODELPA party, 5 or 33.3 percent are also former military officers (Territorial Forces or regular),²⁰⁵⁴ with only 2 women MPs.

At the swearing in of the new Parliament in October 2014, Baledrokadroka observed that the ten former military officers in the FFP and several (non-military) members of FFP wore regimental neckties as a display of solidarity, symbolising "the pervasiveness of the Fiji military's political power."²⁰⁵⁵ It also marked the fact that former coup leader Bainimarama would now be around for another four years as elected prime minister, making it twelve years in all until the 2018 elections. This signals that the military is likely to "remain close to the centre of power."²⁰⁵⁶

Surprisingly, the 2014 election results delivered some positive signs for women, especially given the Pacific region's poor record of women's representation in politics in the world.²⁰⁵⁷ Eight women in total were elected out of fifty (50) elected members, which represented 16 percent (16%) of Parliament. This was a marked improvement from 11% in the 2006 election.²⁰⁵⁸ However, 8 women (16%) compared to 15 former military officers (30%) in Parliament, is disheartening, as it indicates that the military (officers) remained a more pervasive influence in the 2014 Parliament compared to women, who comprised about half of the population.

²⁰⁵¹ Priya Chattier. 2015. Women in the House (of Parliament) in Fiji: What's gender got to do with it? *The Roundtable: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*. Vol 104 (2): p. 185;

²⁰⁵² Pacific Women in Politics (Pacwip), Country profile: Fiji, in <https://www.pacwip.org/country-profiles/fiji/>

²⁰⁵³ Baledrokadroka, J. 2016. The Fiji military and the 2014 elections, in Ratuva, S. and Lawson, S. (eds). *The People have spoken: the 2014 Elections in Fiji*. Canberra: ANU Press, p. 177;

²⁰⁵⁴ Baledrokadroka, 2016: p.177;

²⁰⁵⁵ Baledrokadroka, 2016: pp. 177-8

²⁰⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 178;

²⁰⁵⁷ Chattier, 2015: p. 178

²⁰⁵⁸ *ibid*

Chattier notes that the increase in the number of women in Parliament denotes a change in public perception towards women and political leadership.²⁰⁵⁹ This study argues that it was women's own capacity for agency that had changed the perceptions and achieved the results for women. Through the determination and visibility of the co-Convenors of the Women's Forum, they created the platform to mobilise, empower and educate women and implemented strategies to increase women's participation in democratic leadership. Not only did they encourage voters, especially women to use their power of the vote to support women candidates, but they also provided practical support such as raising funds to assist women candidates.²⁰⁶⁰ The final Women's Forum outcomes statement for example, had boldly called for Temporary Special Measures (TSM) to be implemented through a 50 percent quota allocation for women in any new legislature and/or a compulsory 50 percent female candidate quota for political parties.²⁰⁶¹

At the regional level, the 2014 election result placed the proportion of women MPs in Fiji slightly above the Pacific average of 15 percent (15%) and closer to the global average of 22 percent of women politicians.²⁰⁶² Since the election, the proportion of women MPs had dropped slightly to 14%, following Jiko Luveni's nomination and subsequent appointment as Speaker of the House.²⁰⁶³ This follows a similar reduction in the number of former military officers after Brigadier Joji Konrote was nominated and installed as Fiji's President by the Fiji First government. There were important milestones for women also in the new Parliament, after Jiko Luveni became Fiji's first female Speaker of the House, while Ro Teimumu Kepa became Leader of the Opposition. Obviously, there is still a long way to go before the women of Fiji realise their full potential as voters, with the power to put more women into Parliament who can genuinely represent their interests, through the principles of gender equality and respect for human rights.

Post-coup Transition Process - Not a level playing field?

Despite high expectations for change in the first election after eight years of despotic rule, the 2014 elections did not produce a dramatic change in Fiji's political landscape. Bainimarama's military regime, which had metamorphosed into the Fiji First political party (FFP) to contest the elections, was returned to power with a mandate from the people.

²⁰⁵⁹ Chattier, 2015: p. 178

²⁰⁶⁰ *ibid*

²⁰⁶¹ Jojiana Cokanasiga. 1/09/2014. Fiji's election: Women make their mark, in <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/fijis-election-women-make-their-mark>

²⁰⁶² Chattier, 2015: p. 178

²⁰⁶³ *ibid*

Their success confirms what Fraenkel refers to as the “remorseless power of incumbency,” but which is referred to in this study as the “soldier-turn-civilian” (STC) model.

The STC model is a common political phenomenon in former British colonies in West Africa²⁰⁶⁴, where soldiers who seize power in a coup, employ a combination of tactics to “control” the election process in order to remain in power.²⁰⁶⁵ Like STC incumbents, the Bainimarama regime used a combination of tactics and advantages to ‘micro-manage’ Fiji’s transition programs to retain power.

These include the advantage of incumbency, an early lead over the opposition through ‘unofficial’ campaigning during ‘official’ tours, superior financial resources by exploiting state coffers, unfettered access to state-controlled and sympathetic media outlets, a ‘hand-picked’ and ‘controlled’ Electoral Commission, a ‘doctored’ constitution and restrictive political party and electoral decrees, which were all designed to give the incumbent the advantage to win the election and remain in power.²⁰⁶⁶

The stakes are high for STC transition leaders, hence incumbents will attempt to win the election “at all costs.” Losing is not option and the fear of losing is very real, because defeat means not only loss of emoluments, perks and the status the office has brought, but also loss of face and possible jail sentences.²⁰⁶⁷

For Fiji as in other ‘STC’ transition states, ‘controlled’ elections do not necessarily mean transition to a more democratic environment since the ‘transition’ process is held in an uneven playing field where conditions largely favour the incumbents. Hence, instead of achieving genuine democracy, the election serves to re-entrench military rule and legitimise militarism under a “flawed” democratic process.

Fraenkel affirms that the 2014 election:

proved a landslide victory for coup leader-turned Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama’s Fiji First Party. This was a ‘competitive authoritarian’ election, characterised by careful controls over media outlets, manipulation of rules regarding political parties and candidate nominations, and selective use of

²⁰⁶⁴ British West African states that have gone through military coups include Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Benin, Togo, etc.

²⁰⁶⁵ Saine, A.S. 2000. The Soldier-turned presidential candidate: A comparison of flawed democracy in Ghana and Gambia. *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, 28 (2): 191-209;

²⁰⁶⁶ Saine, 2000:

²⁰⁶⁷ *ibid*

state finances to harass opponents. It was a genuine contest only in so far as the government could control the process.

As Fiji geared up for another election in 2018, it is worthy to note that the leaders of the three largest political parties in Parliament, are all former military officers: two are former coup perpetrators, Sitiveni Rabuka who led the first coup and now leader of SODELPA, and Voreqe Bainimarama of the Fiji First Party and perpetrator of the fourth coup, while Pio Tikoduadua a former Bainimarama coup loyalist and former member and Minister in the FFP government following the 2014 election, is the current President of NFP. With the 'controlled' electoral process and the lack of media freedom due to a 'controlled' media, we shall continue to see the pervasive influence of the military and former military officers in Fiji's political arena in post-2018 Fiji.

Conclusion

Consistent with the principles of feminist research practice that have guided this research, this chapter expands on aspects of women's agency not covered in the coup chapters, by considering "action-oriented" models that women have been involved in or have recommended, to address some of the inter-generational impacts of the coups and militarization in Fiji.

These include a 'Peace and Reconciliation' model in which a traditional chief, Tui Noco of Rewa province, traditionally "adopted" a group of descendants of indentured labourers into his clan. Their relationship was sealed when Tui Noco acknowledged that the ancestors of this group, who had died when their ship ran aground at sea off Noco in the late 1800s, and by virtue of their burial on the ancestral burial grounds of Tui Noco, qualified them to be part of the Tui Noco clan. This model may serve to address the *vulagi* status dilemma that Indo-Fijians have bemoaned since their ancestors arrived as indentured labourers in Fiji over a century ago. The second model, proposed by many interviewees is a 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission' (TRC) to address the generational "trauma" suffered by victims of all the coups and for the healing of the nation as a whole. A third issue highlighted the concern by women on the increasing militarization of young people through the 'cadet scheme' in schools. Many women have proposed peaceful, non-militarised strategies to 'discipline' and mould the character of young pupils at schools without resorting to the militarised model of the cadet system, which is a top-down approach in which students are expected to obey and follow orders without being encouraged to think for themselves.

Strategies recommended by women include the Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, school clubs or sports that encourage collaboration, team work and cooperation.

The chapter ends with an analysis of the 2014 election results for women and the political parties. It notes that the 2014 elections did not produce any dramatic change in leadership as the incumbent Bainimarama military regime, which had contested the elections under the Fiji First party, was returned to power. The return of the Bainimarama regime in the transitional election was assessed under the 'soldier-turn-civilian' (STC) model, a common political phenomenon in coup-ridden British west African states, to show how the incumbent, was able to exploit resources and manipulate various strategies to "control" the election to ensure they retain power. The 'transitional' elections therefore do not necessarily translate to a more "democratic" environment, as the transitional election process is not held on a level playing field, since the conditions of elections largely favour the incumbents. Instead of achieving genuine democracy, the 2014 election has only served to consolidate militarism, legitimise and entrench military rule under a 'flawed' democratic process.

The election results delivered some positive signs for women, with eight women elected into the 50-member Parliament, accounting for 16% of elected members. This was a marked improvement from 11% in the 2006 elections and a testimony to the sterling efforts and agency of the women's movement to educate voters especially women, to change perceptions and encourage more women into leadership positions as candidates. The result for women was disheartening however, when compared with 15 former military officers (30%) as elected members, which indicates that the military remains a pervasive influence in the 2014 Parliament compared to women, despite comprising almost half of the population. As Fiji gears up for the 2018 election, it is important to note that the three largest political parties are led by former military officers, two as former coup perpetrators and one as coup loyalist and former military officer. With 'controlled' electoral process and media restrictions which largely favour the incumbents, the pervasive influence of the military, former military officers and coup makers in Fiji's political arena, is likely to be a permanent feature of the post-2018 Parliament.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Introduction

This final chapter draws together the main findings and conclusion of this research and its contribution to the discourse and literature on gender intersectionality and militarization in Fiji and the Pacific region. It presents a summary and discussion of the key findings, together with an assessment of how broadly this research has been consistent with its guiding feminist research principles.

This research had set out with two key objectives: to investigate the construction and manifestation of militarised masculinity in the militarization of Fiji through the four military coups between 1987 and 2006; and to examine the impact of militarization from women's perspectives, by highlighting women's capacity to express agency within the limits of the oppressive and militarised conditions of the coups, and the consequent process of militarization.

The study highlights three key findings: the manifestation of culturally-sanctioned violent forms of militarised and masculinist norms that intersect with other social identities particularly race and status, to produce militarized conditions in Fiji; the prevalence of a patronage relationship or clientelism among those in leadership positions in Fiji; and the capacity for women's agency to rise above the constraints of the oppressive and militarised conditions to offer peaceful and egalitarian alternatives for a more stable and peaceful Fiji.

I. GENDER CONSTRUCTION IN COUPS AND MILITARIZATION

Coups as manifestations of culturally-sanctioned, hyper-militarised, masculinist norms

The construction of masculinist gender norms in the militarization of Fiji through the military coups and post-coup militarization, reveal the manifestation of hegemonic forms of militarised masculinity in which the indigenous Fijian cultural notions of masculinity intersect with the gendered ideology of the military to produce a hyper-militarized masculinity that legitimizes male dominance, aggression, force and violence. Such masculinist norms, aided by the military's access to arms and force as tools of violence in

its legitimate security role, have produced and reinforced a deeply worrying process of militarization as evident in Fiji within three decades after independence. Historical evidence indicates however, that the coups are not the result of a sudden reaction by the military against democratic governments that did not meet its expectations, but influenced rather by a range of historical factors that have entrenched a sense of entitlement and a perception by the military, of its role in national affairs. During colonial days for example, the pre-dominantly ethnic Fijian military was called upon to quell strikes by Indians in the sugarcane industry, in the interest of the establishment and the chiefs. This had ingrained a perception by the military of its role, which is reinforced by cultural factors such as the *'turaga-bati'* ideology, that had persisted in 1987 when Rabuka carried out the first coup to restore power to the chiefs, and in Speight's coup of 2000. Military coups have come to reflect the dependence of Fijian men in the military on the power of guns and violence to resolve political conflicts, rather than pursuing non-violent, conflict transformative and peaceful means. It therefore behoves indigenous Fijian men and women to look deeply within their socialisation structures and systems to identify and root out violent constructions of gender intersectionality in exchange for more positive, respectful and peaceful models, for a more progressive society.

Coups: Cost of investing in 'Masculinity' through Peacekeeping

Perhaps the greatest impact of masculinist norms in the militarization of Fiji derives from the paradox between two main preoccupations of the Fiji military after independence, by participating in global peacekeeping and perpetrating local military coups. The coups are the price that Fiji has paid for investing in 'masculinity' and hence 'militarization' as a foreign policy through peacekeeping, as a source of revenue and to reinforce Fiji's role in world peace as a good global citizen. The skills and knowledge that the peacekeepers have acquired from peacekeeping operations in post-conflict zones have boosted the military's self-confidence and perception of its role in the national interest, to the extent of committing treason by overthrowing democratically elected governments in the military coups.

Peacekeeping: a 'crisis' in Masculinity

This thesis has applied and advanced Whitworth's argument on the contradiction between a soldier trained for combat being involved in peacekeeping instead. The role of Fijian soldiers as global peacekeepers is juxtaposed against their role as internal peace-breakers

in the military coups, thus confirming Whitworth's argument that the training of soldiers for combat and defence, is in contradiction with peacekeeping operations which Fijian soldiers have mostly been involved in, thereby creating a "crisis in masculinity." As they struggle to restore the equilibrium from such a contradiction, Fijian soldiers vent the frustration of this "crisis in masculinity" by inflicting violence against women and vulnerable family members. Women have silently borne the burden of violence in the home by accepting the violence as their burden, and their sacrifice on behalf of the nation. They have also taken on the extra burdens as heads of households in order to free up the men for deployment. The role of indigenous women in Fiji must therefore be acknowledged and recognised for sustaining the global peacekeeping operations and the war machinery that fuels it, by taking over the responsibilities of the men who are deployed in trouble spots around the world, and for bearing the burden of violence inflicted by returning peacekeepers.

The "crisis in masculinity" suffered by peacekeepers, has given rise to the perpetrator of violence in the home which parallels the coup makers, whose personal motivations and frustrations are unleashed at the national level through the military coups and reinforced in various forms of gender-based violence against unarmed civilians, through "psy-ops" (psychological operations) and the "*buturaki*" culture or 'mob mentality' by members of the security forces. This thesis also points to the need for returning peacekeepers to be monitored for Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) following deployment.

Militarized masculinity requires feminine complement for validation

Militarised masculinity is a model of masculinity that depends on a feminine complement for validation. A year after the 1987 coups, women were recruited into the Fiji military for the first time, while women have recently been recruited into the naval division for the first time. Many military wives have had to sacrifice their own personal goals and professional careers, to support their husbands in post-coup civil service or diplomatic appointments. Women as wives, mothers, girlfriends, sisters or as female relatives, have provided an ideological legitimisation and emotional support for militarised masculinities, whether in support of the coups, or the recruitment of their male relatives in foreign armies, or as private security guards in post-war rehabilitation.²⁰⁶⁸

²⁰⁶⁸ Cock, J. (1989). Keeping the Fires Burning: Militarization and the Politics of Gender in South Africa. *Review of African Political Economy*, 16 (No. 45/46), p.55;

II. PATRONAGE AND CLIENTELISM IN MILITARIZATION AMONG ELITE

Since the colonial days and more so following localization at independence, a pattern of patron-clientelist relationship has prevailed between the ruling chiefly establishment and the military. The colonial system of indirect native administration promoted a model of leadership based on the notion that political leadership was the exclusive preserve of Fijian chiefs, particularly the Polynesian-influenced eastern chiefly dynasty, whose descendants took over the helm of political leadership at independence. The clientelist relationship with the military was strengthened after independence when senior military officers were appointed from among these chiefly families. It became more pronounced as a feature of military rule following the coups, when benefits of office were distributed to descendants of these chiefs for their support to legitimise the coups.

Coups as symptoms of declining power and influence of Chiefs

The justification of the early coups on the restoration of Fijian chiefly rule was counter-intuitive, as each successive coup became a symptom of the declining power and influence of the ruling chiefly class at national level, and in its long-standing patronage relationship with the military. The coups had turned out a reversal of roles, with the chiefs now beholden to the military and the coup makers.

The 'writing was on the wall' soon after the 1987 coups, when Rabuka who had justified the coups to restore power to the chiefs, had stood for and won the Presidency of the chiefs-sponsored SVT political party, against the highest (female) chief of the Burebasaga confederacy and paramount chief of Rewa province, Ro Lady Lala Mara and wife of Ratu Mara. Rabuka then successfully led the party onto the 1992 and 1994 elections and subsequently became Prime Minister for two terms until 1999 when his SVT party lost. A major crack appeared when Rabuka, who was not a traditional chief, was rewarded with 'life membership' of the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC), a privilege which no other chief had received in their lifetime. Then a historic break occurred at the height of the 2000 coup-hostage crisis, when senior military officers traditionally requested the President and Commander in Chief Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, to step aside and allow the military to take over the government, as they could no longer guarantee his safety. The final demise for the chiefly establishment came following the 2006 coup, when the GCC was suspended and eventually abolished by Bainimarama's military regime. The end for the GCC followed

two decades when the GCC teetered and wavered on the rule of law of “civilised societies” that the chief Ratu Cakobau had accepted when he surrendered his old war club and covered it with emblems of peace at the Cession ceremony in 1874. By supporting the coups and the ideology of militarism, the GCC had gone against the very spirit and principles of Cession, to be an ‘emblem’ for peace and stability in the governing of the nation. Instead, each coup had driven a nail into the coffin of the GCC and the chiefly establishment to its current resting place.

Coups replace chiefly class and political elites with a new Military elite

As the power and influence of the chiefly class diminishes, a new class of military elite made up of senior military officers, has emerged to replace the chiefs. These senior officers make up the new clientelists under the patronage of the coup maker.

Patronage and clientelism has largely impacted the potential for ‘meritocracy’ in Fiji, in which the process of merit appointment of civilians to senior civil service and diplomatic posts, has been replaced by the appointment of senior military officers to reinforce military ‘control’ in the upper echelons of government, in exchange for their ‘loyalty’ to the coup maker as the chief patron. Such practice, like corruption, nepotism and cronyism, hinders real growth and development, since the best qualified human resources, both men and women, are overlooked when “loyalty” is prioritised as a criterion of appointment for ‘clients’ of the ‘patron.’

Patronage engenders ‘sense of entitlement’ by the military

Patronage and clientelism has engendered a ‘sense of entitlement’ among clienteles as beneficiaries of the coups. Senior officers in the military feel that they are entitled to the favours they receive and feel emboldened to break the laws that are put in place as checks and balances against the abuse of power. The overthrow of democratic governments through the military coups and the usurpation of power by coup makers become institutionalised through the patronage system by Presidential decree which then excuses the wrong by granting immunity (impunity) for coup makers and members of the security forces. Many women have expressed concern that extending immunity to coup makers is a recipe for future coups, and that the cycle of coups shall continue as long as privileges are extended to the beneficiaries of the coups. Women have called for justice to prevail by holding coup makers and security officers accountable to the same laws that apply to the rest of society.

III. WOMEN'S AGENCY IN RESPONSE TO MILITARIZATION

Women have utilised resources available to them such as time, energy, skills, knowledge, and opportunity, to be able to influence positive outcomes. As women have not been enmeshed as a group in the messy business of political patronage, they have developed the 'capacity to act' in response to the limiting conditions of militarization imposed upon them.

Political agency

Women have expressed political agency by participating, mobilising and making representation in the formal political process and engaging in collective actions and associations to influence political outcomes.

As women struggled to maintain the gains made during periods of democratic rule, they soon learnt during times of crisis such as the coups, to be smart in the way they interacted with those in political and military leadership. As individuals, organisations, and collectively, women recognise that they can achieve a lot more when they remain united and prove that women can work together across race, class, sexuality, location, religion, etc. despite the challenges.

Six years after the 2006 coup, the inaugural Fiji Women's Forum was formed when women seized the opportunity provided by the 2012 constitution-making process to identify four key issues, which included 'the role of the security forces,' to negotiate with the military regime. They maintain that military involvement in government must cease once Fiji returns to democracy. Women have also expressed concern about the increasing militarization of the school system, through the military cadet training scheme.

Women had pressed for the 'immunity' clause to be removed from the constitution as it is a license for further coups. They assert that those who have committed politically motivated crimes through the coups and acts of militarization, must be held accountable for their actions. Women agree that the granting of immunity in the constitution, institutionalises, privileges and excuses a group of men in Fiji to get away with their unlawful acts, by allowing military officers who break the law and usurp power, to evade taking responsibility for their actions. It also reveals the depth that patronage and clientelist relations in favour of the military and coup makers has become deeply entrenched in the supreme laws of Fiji, to the detriment of the nation as a whole.

Insights from a gender and intersectional analysis

A key contribution of this study to the literature on the coups and militarization in Fiji is the insight gained from applying a gender and intersectional analysis which identifies some of the taken-for-granted assumptions about the impact of the coups on women. The perception that indigenous Fijians have benefited from the early coups, fails to take into account the diverse experience of Fijian women in terms of class or status such as those in the civil service, garment factories, or tourism and hospitality, who lost their jobs and struggled to make ends meet. Certainly, the coups created more difficulties for them instead of benefiting them as indigenous Fijians.

Secondly, the claim that the coups have benefited indigenous Fijians, is not true for many Fijian women who were discriminated against in terms of their religion, sexuality, class, status, location, etc. Fijian women outside of the dominant Methodist church felt excluded by the post-1987 Sunday observance decrees, which imposed Sunday observance restrictions, and discriminated against those who worshiped on Saturday sabbath. Furthermore, an indigenous Fijian woman from a minority sexuality group faced more harassment from men in the security forces due to her sexuality, compared to a non-Fijian 'straight' woman. The research has also highlighted how young, urbanite, educated, outspoken, middle-class Fijian women activists were subjected to physical torture, harassment and abuse for daring to speak out in protest against the coups and militarism. The diversity of indigenous women's experiences of militarization, based on their multiple identities and social locations in the hierarchies of power and privilege, serve as a legitimate source of knowledge in the current study. By examining the various perspectives of women in different intersectional locations such class, status, age, religion, location, sexuality, etc. this study has portrayed women as the producers of knowledge which can transform society.

Transformative, action-oriented component of this research

In line with the feminist research principle of a transformative, action-oriented component, this study has identified two transformative practical approaches to address some of the issues identified in the research.

A Peace and Reconciliation model is recommended to address the long-standing '*Taukei-Vulagi*' (native-guest) dilemma between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians. Despite over a hundred years in Fiji, Indo-Fijians are still regarded as '*vulagi*' (visitor-guest) due to the indigenous notion of identity that is rooted to the '*vanua*' or land. The model embodies the

gesture of goodwill extended by the late Tui Noco (Chief of Noco) in Rewa province, Ratu Isoa Damudamu, who had traditionally “adopted” a group of descendants of the ‘Girmitiya’ (indentured labourers) into his clan as “na Luvedra na Ratu,” (Children of the Chief of Noco),”²⁰⁶⁹ and part of the ‘vanua’ Noco, Rewa. This model could work well in other parts of Fiji, and could be extended to other communities who call Fiji home such as the Solomoni, Banabans, Kioans, and others, subject to the goodwill and collaboration of both parties. However, this gesture of goodwill but must be earned through mutual understanding and respect. It would also lead to greater understanding between and among different racial and cultural groups, that could minimize the tensions and suspicions at the root of the coups.

A second strategy proposed by women is a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), as a fair means of addressing the trauma and sufferings, and the inter-generational impact of the coups on individuals, families and the community, and for the healing of the nation as a whole. While some women view the granting of immunity in the constitution as the use of dishonest or false scales, the TRC is proposed as a fairer standard that should be included in the constitution, that would follow a transitional justice process that could take care of ‘immunity.’ By documenting the coups as a piece of history, women believe that people of Fiji would not want to go down that road again. It would also be a good way of holding accountable those who have gotten away with ‘immunity.’

CONCLUSION

The current research is consistent with the broader principles of feminist research by focusing on gender norms and gender (in)equality, that examines women’s experiences as a source of knowledge, and proposes a transformative, action-oriented component that can be utilised by women in advocacy and activism for their own empowerment and liberation. Two other feminist principles addressed in the methodology section of this research include: reflexivity, as part of the on-going analysis of my position as a feminist researcher studying my own group, and the use of non-oppressive, egalitarian and participatory methods of gathering information, which is addressed through the method of ‘*talanoa*’ and ‘*tara koro*.’

²⁰⁶⁹ Fiji Times, 10/6/2018. Tui Noco laid to rest, in <http://www.fijitimes.com/tui-noco-laid-to-rest/>

This research is intended to bridge the gap between academe and activism, by contributing knowledge that can be utilised by activists in their work to promote gender equality, peaceful co-existence, tolerance, and understanding among the diverse, intersectional identities and social relations that we interact from.

In light of the increasing militarization of young people in Fiji, and the manifestations of culturally-sanctioned, violent forms of militarised masculinities through the coups as scrutinised in this study, Enloe's challenge is a timely reminder for women in Fiji:

Women in their diverse roles may or may not support their country's military; they may or may not think soldiering is a smart career choice. Women may or may not think a man in uniform is more attractive than a man in a business suit... which[ever] assessment any given woman arrives at, it is more than likely to affect how she uses her considerable influence over the young men in her family and in her social circle.²⁰⁷⁰

Indeed, it is hoped that women (and men) who read this study, may use their influence over the young boys and girls, and the women and men in their social circle, to embrace and translate positive, respectful and non-violent forms of masculinity and femininity, that contributes to a more compassionate, just and peaceful community.

²⁰⁷⁰ Enloe, C. (2014). Understanding Militarization and the Linkages with Globalization. Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) May 24 Action Pack, Gender and Militarization: Analysing the Links to Strategize for Peace;

APPENDIX 1

This section describes the process of collecting, managing and analysing the data collected from the primary interviews, and how the data has been coded, analysed and managed in the processing and analysis stages.

The initial aim of the research is to examine the impact of militarization on women as a result of the four military coups between 1987 and 2006. Over time, the research question developed further to investigate how gender is constructed in the perpetration of the military coups and the consequent process of militarization following each coup. With further development and refining, the research question centred on, “How does a feminist intersectional approach contribute to an understanding of the gendered impacts of militarization, and on the capacity of Fijian women to express agency?” Answers gathered from the interview would help to identify the ways in which militarization intersect women’s social identities such as gender, race, class, status, religion, sexuality, age, location, etc. to reinforce or shape their experiences and responses to militarization.

A list of potential interviewees was recommended by my key contact in Fiji, based on their participation in civic education workshops and two previous Women’s Forum consultations in which the role of the military and the impact of the coups had been the subject of discussion and outcome document. This was an example of ‘purposeful sampling’ which is widely used in qualitative research to identify and select participants based on their knowledge of the subject being studied, so their knowledge could be a rich source of information on militarization as the subject of investigation.

I was in Fiji for the scheduled field study for two weeks, from November 30th to December 15th 2012. The University of Auckland Human Participation Ethics Committee Approval (Reference No. 8198) was granted for 3 years from July 25th 2012, to July 25th 2015. Following further contact upon arrival in Suva, I was able to identify and confirm with 16 indigenous Fijian women, who were willing to be interviewed and share their perspectives and experience on the impact of the coups and militarization.

I used in-depth, semi-structured interview as the most appropriate method of gathering information, although there were times when the unstructured, conversational interviews was used, which was a more informal indigenous conversational session of “*talanoa*.” I kept an interview schedule to guide the session, although it was often discarded to encourage flexibility so that the participant could speak freely and spontaneously from her own

perspective, instead of responding to rigidly set questions, especially where follow-up questions were necessary. The interview ranged from half an hour for a brief meeting to two hours for a longer session.

Interviewees were sent the Participant Information sheet (PIS) and consent form to provide further information for their “informed” consent. Copies in English or Fijian were also distributed at the beginning of the interview, depending on the language preferred by the participant. The PIS included the objective of the research, interview format and times, participant rights to confidentiality, non-attributable basis, and to withdraw at any stage of the interview. A list of sample questions was also included so participants could have an idea of the information being sought. Only one interviewee signed and returned the consent form, while the rest preferred that the interview be accepted as verbal consent.

The interviews were recorded on a digital audio recorder in the preferred language, English or Fijian. The recorded interview was then transcribed verbatim if done in English, or translated into English if done in Fijian. Written notes were also taken during the interview, which was later checked against the recorded interview. Wherever possible, time available in between interviews and at night was used to transcribe and translate the interview, while still fresh. Because the digital recorder was borrowed from the University, all recorded interview was to be deleted as soon as I got back to Auckland in December. Furthermore, all interview data or transcription would be stored for a period of six years, after which time they will be destroyed by deleting the files.

I was reminded by Smart’s observation that much of the richness is eliminated when turning talk into the written word, as the “process of transcription robs speech of a great deal of its texture, even if pauses, laughter and tears, are indicated in the text.”²⁰⁷¹ She notes that “interviews” require respondents to provide a linear narrative, which is then “flattened” onto a page of typescript, robbed of a great deal of expression and non-verbal communication.²⁰⁷² For this reason, I decided to include expressions of “um” “ahhh,” in the transcription notes, so as to reflect the “pauses, laughter and tears” in the audio recording.

²⁰⁷¹ Smart, pp.295-6

²⁰⁷² Smart, pp.295-6

Data Analysis

As soon as each interview data was transcribed, I had to go through each transcription notes again to analyse and identify key themes that emerge from the interview text, by using an analytical coding process that was consistent with the questions being probed. Coding was done digitally at first, by allocating colour codes or highlights for data from each transcription that was consistent with the other emerging themes. The emerging themes that were coded and highlighted by colour scheme included: agency against militarism, cadet scheme, factors contributing to coup syndrome, election as exit strategy, guns and gender violence, Human Rights Commission and other institutions, identity politics, immunity, impact of coups on economic status, intersectionality and militarism, manifestation of militarism in sports, militarism and civil service, etc. These were then printed and put into separate folders according to emerging themes, with accompanying notes related to the questions for analysis.

Going through these transcripts is like panning for gold, as key quotes and fresh perspectives, like gem, are extracted and placed in the thematic folders for inclusion into the thesis. Transcription and analysis of data became simultaneous activities. Throughout this process of transcribing, translating, coding and analysis, I found myself overwhelmed and fully immersed in the text. I therefore utilised an 'immersive interpretive' method, as I had become thoroughly familiar with the text, that allows me to easily identify the key themes and interpret the nuances around them. The same process was used for the analysis of the unstructured conversational 'talanoa' sessions from the notes taken in informal social functions and for the content and textual analysis of annual reports, policy documents, newspaper articles, research articles, briefing papers, etc. I found this method to be particularly well suited to research given my own positionality.

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